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Polyhedron™

NEWSZINE

Bookwyrms

Narrowing Down Infinite Possibilities

by Timothy B. Brown

Way back in October of 1989 we were given the go-ahead to create a new campaign setting for the AD&D® game. Older campaign worlds, it's reasoned, lose their appeal over time. New blood was in order, so a group of designers and editors was given the task of world building.

Interestingly, perhaps the most frequently asked question of writers at conventions is "why did you design the world that way?" The exact process is not carved in stone—any number of approaches can be used, have been used by lots of different designers.

Let me describe how it all came together in at least one case.

With an infinity of possible fantasy worlds to invent, where would we begin? Armed only with the agreement that we didn't want to simply repackage the same old stuff, and with the working title "Outworld," the debates began.

Looking at our other campaign worlds, we took note of the concurrent themes—elves and dwarves, enchanted mountains and forests, castles and dungeons. While easily repackaged with new maps and names, we agreed to chuck it all and shake things up a bit. But that's where the agreement ended. Since Outworld had to be an AD&D campaign world, we couldn't abandon the rules, nor did we want to. However, there was no one who said we couldn't shove things around some, remolding the game's rules to better suit our world—whatever that would be.

Plenty of ideas hit the table, and then the chopping block. The notion of a renaissance world with gunpowder and magic didn't fly. Ideas concerning ancient technologies and even a far-future Earth also met the guillotine. The crystal-based magic system died a quick death—too new age for most of us.

Nevertheless, the team noticed certain concepts that met with fewer groans than others. Most of us were in favor of a world where the usual fantasy creatures are either gone or somehow twisted and new. The world should be brutal, full of savage creatures and environments. We also agreed that new approaches to both clerical and wizard magic would make a good change. As a generalization, we wanted play in Outworld to be more character driven than situation driven—the influence of a character on the world should range widely and change rapidly.

Armed with these generalities, Troy Denning, Mary Kirchoff, and myself started to flesh out our new campaign setting. In a series of meetings that saw seasons come and go, the framework of the Dark Sun world was born.

Our world, renamed Athas, is a desert wasteland ruined by centuries of destructive magic. Terrible dragon overseers watch over decadent sorcerer-kings—despotic rulers of isolated city-states. Each city-state, on its own island of shrinking good-lands, is administered by the wicked templars, evil clerics who watch over the armies of slaves and undead. Outside the cities, tribes of former slaves, wild elves, savage halflings, and carnivorous thri-kreen prey on the caravans and villages of the deserts. Beyond, where there was once an ocean of water, lays a sea of dust and silt. The islands in this waste are inhabited by giants who wade across the dust to raid the coastal towns.

From time to time the scorching desert winds uncover ruins of a glorious past, where valuable metal weapons sometimes can be found. On top of all this, we come upon Athas at a time of sweeping change—slaves and nobles are gathering forces to confront the templars and sorcerer-kings. Storm clouds are on every horizon as the battles for the desert world begin.

Even with the design team hard at work, a crucial element was missing—art. Enter Gerald Brom, eager to dive right in. Brom's vision of the world was incredible, so we agreed to just turn him loose. Brom had a free hand in bringing the Dark Sun world to light, and the results are fabulous.

As I said, to accommodate the Dark Sun setting, the AD&D game rules had to be shoved around some. Character races include humans, elves, half-elves, dwarves, muls, half-giants, halflings, and thri-kreen. But they're not what you might think. The elves, for example, are irresponsible, seven-foot-tall desert runners, savage warriors who rule vast domains of sands and steppes. The other races are different, too.

Oh, by the way, Dark Sun characters are naturally tougher than other AD&D game characters—they roll 5d4 for ability scores.

The character classes include fighters, gladiators, rangers, defilers, mages, illusionists, clerics, druids, templars, bards, thieves, traders, and psionicists. A defiler is an undisciplined mage whose every spell destroys the environment, widening the deserts and ruining the good-lands. Templars are the inquisitional bureaucrats of the city-states.

The Dark Sun setting has some other surprises, too. Players are encouraged to have multiple characters in the campaign, using something called a character tree. Psionics is highly recommended, but not required.

"But isn't this the *Bookwyrms* column? What about novels?"

The Dark Sun line begins with the **Prism Pentad,** five novels that introduce the sweeping change over the world as experienced by our three main characters. Rikus is a former gladiatorial slave who applies his military might against the sorcerer-kings. Agis is a noble who instigates rebellion among his own and among the huge slave populations. Sadira is a magician, and, therefore, an outlaw—the sorcerer-kings hold a monopoly on magic and execute those who learn its powers.

Troy Denning will author all five novels of the pentad—his novels *Waterdeep* and *Dragonwall* have been well-received. Troy's own adventurous spirit has molded the savage Dark Sun world. His approach to the novels will undoubtedly capture Dark Sun's flavor, nurture it, and spark its growth.

Watch for his first novel, *The Verdant Passage,* in stores this fall.

As a new campaign setting, the Dark Sun world strives to stretch the envelope of the AD&D game. Yes, it's an AD&D game world, but like no other. We're planning all sorts of new ideas for the game line—short stories that double as plot synopses, new adventure designs that concentrate on player handouts, unfolding the changing world, and more. In books and in game products, the Dark Sun world promises to be a tantalizing adventure. Come with us. ❑

About the Cover

Artist Gerald Brom offers us a glimpse at a DARK SUN™ world creature.

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Notes from HQ

Hot Apple Pie With A Dash Of ConnCon

ConnCon in Danbury Connecticut is known for several Network firsts. This year, the convention provided the greatest number of locally-written, first-run Network-sanctioned events ever—15!

That's quite a feat for a two-day convention, and I suspect it's a record that will stand for awhile. But ConnCon Coordinator (and Regional Director) Willi Burger, and his tournament coordinator Wayne Straiton did not stop there.

They devised an AD&D® Game Masters event that sent me to the kitchen.

Wayne authored the tournament—*Twin Bill.* I won't give away much of the adventure, because you might play it at one of your local conventions. But I have to reveal a little to let you in on one of ConnCon's highlights. The player characters are three sets of twins, and each set has a recipe for apple pie. The twins are convening at their grandmother's house to bake a pie—and they have to decide what recipe to use.

While this is only a small part of the scenario, most of the masters groups at ConnCon made a big deal about it. One group couldn't agree, and the pie was never baked. A second group got into an argument, and one of the characters threw down a *Daern's Instant Fortress*, which demolished grandmother's house. The third group—my session of players—decided grandmother deserved a pie. Wolff and Byrd cartoonist Batton Lash, who stopped by for one day of the convention, looked on as the players spent roughly one and a half hours choosing a recipe. Actually, rather than select *one* recipe from their three to bake, they worked hard to *combine* all three.

Yum.

Now, the players had no idea that following the tournament Wayne was taking me to his mother's house so I could bake this culinary repast. The session ended at 8 p.m. Wayne and I went grocery shopping promptly thereafter (and I had a hard time keeping a straight face in the store as we picked out the ingredients). Then it was off to the kitchen.

It took a few hours—as this pie was from scratch. To further complicate matters, I followed the directions literally. . . at least that's what Wayne and Willi wanted me to do. Now, you have to understand that I have a bad reputation when it comes to cooking. Some of my dishes don't quite turn out. So I was a little skeptical of doing this, as I was certain it would not improve my standing as a chef. However, I resolved to make this one of my best efforts, despite the recipe I had to work with.

I had a difficult time fitting everything into the pie tin—It looked more like a small hill than a pie, and the thing weighed a few pounds. Wayne's mother walked by, looked at the mound of fruit and other components, and said, "Yuk. That looks like cat puke." At the time, it smelled a little funny, too.

Undaunted by the criticism, I stuck the pie in the oven, then watched as it cooked and turned into something resembling a bubbling ooze from Chaosium's *Call of Cthulhu* game. It was a good thing Wayne had thought to put foil underneath the tin. The oven was saved.

In the end, the pie hung together, and we carted it back to the convention site, arriving there shortly before midnight. We left the apple delight well hidden in Wayne's car—foil attached, it wouldn't come off the bottom of the tin.

Heh, heh, heh. Little did my players know what was in store for them.

The convention progressed smoothly, drawing a record 400 gamers and filling nearly 150 Network tables. There were so many tournaments, no one could play in them all. Everyone seemed to have a great time. Batton Lash kindly donated an original Wolff and Byrd illustration, which was auctioned for the convention's charity, The American Heart Association. Proceeds were also donated from a benefit tournament.

Another first was an east-coast Network Clubs tournament. Five Network Clubs struggled for top honors in the grueling competition. In the end, Traveler's Unlimited claimed first place, which was a good thing since the club members had redesigned their trophy case in the hopes of capturing the giant traveling trophy.

Then came Sunday night. A magnificent banquet was followed by the convention awards ceremony.

Willi Burger addressed the group, explaining that so many people attended last year's convention the staff had to move the con into a different hotel this time. Then this year, so many more people came—and filled the rooms to capacity—that next year they were booking every available space in the hotel. "And I dare you to overflow this hotel," he said, adding that this hotel is the largest in Danbury. (I think the membership should turn out in droves.)

When Willi finished, trophies and gift certificates were presented.

And then Wayne brought out the pie.

My startled and embarrassed players were called to the front of the room, I gave a dramatic reading of the recipe, and Wayne cut (sawed, actually, with a very big knife) the pie into six relatively-equal pieces. The crowd surged forward with cameras clicking away and forced the players to dig in, allowing not a crumb to be left unconsumed.

What follows is the recipe constructed by: David Baker, Richard Gurdak, Bryan Villarreal, Alex Bokman, Rick Mangekian, and Brian Phillips. Think twice if you're considering it for your next dessert.

Red Hot Apple Crumb Cream Pie

5 large green apples
1 cup of sugar
¾ cup plus 1 tablespoon flour
4 ounces red hot cinnamon candies
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon nutmeg
½ portion of plain pastry
½ cup butter
1 teaspoon lemon juice
½ cup half & half
¼ cup water

Pare and slice apples. Combine one-half sugar, cream with cinnamon, nutmeg, dollop of butter, and lemon juice. Put into pie shell in pie tin. Combine rest of sugar, water, and cinnamon candies; cook until candies dissolve. Add apples and simmer until apples are red; drain, reserving syrup. Blend flour with one-half cup cooled syrup; add lemon juice. Put apples in pie shell. Pour cinnamon syrup over apples. Pour in cream mixture. Put crumb topping crust on top of cream mixture.

Crumb Topping

Combine one-half cup sugar with three-fourths cup flour. Cut butter in until crumbly.

Bake pie for 10 minutes at 450°. Then bake for 30 minutes at 350°.*

* This really wasn't enough baking time to turn the mélange of ingredients into a full-fledged pie.

I wonder what firsts ConnCon will attempt next spring.

Winter Fantasy

Yes, I know it's only September, and January seems a long time away. But the Network staff is busy with plans for Winter Fantasy—and we wanted to give you a preview.

This is the only convention solely run by the RPGA™ Network. It will be held again at the Ramada Inn Convention Center near the Milwaukee airport. Mark your calendars now for January 3, 4, and 5. Join us.

Welcome On Board

The Network is proud to announce that Denise Lyne has been named the RPGA Network Coordinator for our European Branch.

Denise worked in marketing and with RPGA Network UK for one year before assuming her new post. She also will be handling Network activities for European GEN CON® Game Fair and Games Day.

Under her guidance, Network events in Europe will continue to grow. We'll be learning more about activities in England and the other countries under the UK branch in future issues.

Another Contest

Put your space helmets on and come up with a truly nifty gadget or weapon for GDW's MegaTraveller game.

Guidelines: All entries must be typed, double-spaced, and no gadget or weapon should exceed one page. You are welcome to enter as many times as you like, but make sure each gadget or weapon is on its own page. Put your name and membership number on the upper right hand corner of each page. All entries will be treated as submissions to the Newszine.

Deadline: All entries must be postmarked by October 20, 1991.

Prizes: First Place—A MegaTraveller Player's Manual, Close Orbit And Airspace Control Command handbook, Rebellion Sourcebook, Referee's Companion, and Imperial Encyclopedia. Second and Third Place entries will receive a *Zap Gun For Hire* graphic novel by Phil Foglio.

Do you have an idea for a contest? We at Network HQ love to hold contests. They are a lot of fun, and provide us with material for the Newszine. Please send us your suggestions.

Thanks

Thanks this month go to Steve Hardinger, who worked with The Game Keeper, a large game store in The Glendale Galleria in Glendale California to increase Network exposure through tournaments.

Steve ran several sessions of a Network tournament at the store, filling all the slots. He will be running more tournaments at other shops in California later this fall.

Take Care,

Jean ❑

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Letters

Modules, Issues, and Points

Call me nostalgic, color me olde-fashioned, label me "a behind-the-times kind-of-guy."

First of all, I must state again for the record that the POLYHEDRON™ Newszine is the best 'zine around. There are no comparisons! Even as I type this letter I eagerly await the delivery of the next issue so I may glean useful and entertaining information on the realm of gaming!

Second, I have a question and a request. Long, many moons, ago when the Network was still in its infancy, there were a few RPGA Network modules which could only be purchased by members. Several of these modules have been made into TSR products, i.e. Rahasia and The Black Opal Eye; To The Aid of Falx, The Investigation of Hydell, Egg of the Phoenix, and Doc's Island; and the Prophecy of Brie series. However, there was a module which eludes me.

The module of which I write is "Rod of Seven Parts" by Frank Mentzer. This module was used in Rockcon '86 (check POLYHEDRON Newszine issue #35, way back there—I did my homework!) and was for a purely-dwarven party. If my memory serves me correctly, I think I saw this module advertised for sale in an old Newszine. My question is this: Is this module available for sale (for a reasonable price) or can I get a copy of the old tournament module, again for a reasonable price?

I understand that this may be an unusual request, but I have been plagued by this for quite some time.

Again, thanks for such a great magazine.

Brent F. "Bink" Jacobs
Fitzgerald, GA

The Rod of Seven Parts was never made into a module, although it received extensive tournament play. It is our policy only to make modules available to people judging the event.

Many of the RPGA Network modules you mentioned were printed up to nine years ago, and they are now difficult to obtain. There was a limited print run of them, they were initially only available to members, and most of them are out of print. Those out of print include: R1 To The Aid Of Falx, R2 The Investigation Of Hydell, R3 The Egg Of The Phoenix, RPGA 1 Rahasia, RPGA 4 The Elixir Of Life. The Mail Order Hobby Shop still has for sale a handful of each of the following: R4 Doc's island, RPGA 2 Black Opal Eye, and RPGA 3 The Forgotten King. In addition, the Hobby Shop stocks LC1 Gateway To Ravens Bluff, LC2 Inside Ravens Bluff, LC3 Nightwatch in the Living City, and LC4 Port of Ravens Bluff. You can find the LC series in many game stores.

If you are trying to find out-of-print RPGA Network modules, look to convention game auctions, such as at GEN CON® Game Fair, and try a classified POLYHEDRON Newszine ad.

Nearly all of the featured adventures run in the POLYHEDRON Newszine are former tournaments. For example, Crisis In The Cragmoors, *which appears in this issue, was written for ConnCon '90 and has been played at many conventions throughout the country. If you have a favorite tournament you would like to see in print, please let us know.*

What About Rankings?

I recently joined the RPGA Network and received my membership packet. In it was POLYHEDRON Newszine #59. I started reading it, but quickly became confused with rankings and other similar things. I called a friend who is also a member, and he told me I was supposed to receive a special issue explaining the RPGA Network. If this is the case, could you please send me the issue.

David Deppner
Lincoln, CA

There is no special issue of the Newszine that explains about Network activities. However, a few years ago we published an Introductory Issue. This issue covered some basics, such as attending conventions and forming clubs. And from time to time we still run those types of articles. The Introductory Issue was needed when the POLYHEDRON Newszine was bi-monthly. We needed an issue to include in members' kits that was not dated. Now that the Newszine is monthly, we have a current issue to send out in every batch of new membership kits. By the way, for those of you who have Introductory Issues, hang on to them. They are out of print.

As for rankings. The Network sanctions tournaments for dozens of role playing games from companies throughout the industry. Network members who play in tournaments are awarded points—based on how well they do in the event. The higher you place, the more points you score. You accumulate points much in the same way a character gains points in the AD&D® game. The more points you acquire, the higher level a player and judge you become. At third level, you can compete in Masters Events; at fifth level, Grand Masters; and at seventh, Paragon. Below is a listing of the points and levels.

Every time you renew your membership, you will receive an updated membership card. This has your new levels. The paper the card is attached to details your points.

You can also earn points for writing tournaments, helping at conventions, recruiting members, and other activities.

Within the next few issues we will go more into detail about earning points and about the various activities you, as an RPGA Network member, can become involved in. ❑

The Everwinking Eye

Who's Who in Mulmaster

by Ed Greenwood

"What is worse than a city of thieves? Why, a city of merchants."
Bhelorn Shavarr,
One Warrior's Way
Year of the Grotto

We rode into Mulmaster last time for a look around, and found it not very welcoming. Let's keep looking—carefully!

The Soldiers of Mulmaster

Mulmaster's military strength has been continually increasing to keep pace with its wealth, despite the setbacks in battle against Zhentil Keep. Mulmaster's soldiers are recruited from city residents and from the overcrowded cities of the Vilhon Reach. They are well-trained, well paid, and well-equipped. Their loyalties are carefully examined by the thought-probing magics of Mulmaster's "Cloaks" (Guild of wizards), and the soldiers never grow lax or bored with their duties.

The soldiers are rotated through many tasks: they serve in Mulmaster's war-fleet, land patrols and "Sally Force," and perform diplomatic bodyguard duty (both for outsiders visiting Mulmaster, and for important merchants and nobles of the city who venture elsewhere in the Realms). The military also polices Mulmaster's streets, sewers, and docks. All soldiers receive instruction in one of Mulmaster's often-moved training camps in the mountains nearby; these camps are notorious for punishing drills and for ample—and often tawdry—off-duty entertainments.

Mulmaster has some 6,000 men-at-arms (not including hostlers, quartermasters, messengers, and sailors whose primary role is not to fight). Ten percent of the force are fourth level or higher, and ten percent of this "elite" are 8th level or higher. Ranks in the military are only loosely tied to experience level; from lowest to highest, they are as follows: bladesman, quicksword (ten bladesmen are led by a quicksword), captain (six quickswords report to a captain), strikewhip (all battle messengers, aides-de-camp, and bodyguards to higher ranks are of this rank), battlemaster (general), and the noble Blades and High Blade. The temporarily-appointed leader of a field unit, armed encampment, or area of operations (roughly equivalent to an "Officer of the Day") is known as the Champion of the Charge.

Currently there are eight full battlemasters in the ranks. (Battlemasters in training are known as battlelances. They rank between strikewhip and battlemasters, but are held apart from the chain of command unless all battlemasters are slain.) One battlemaster, Thiondred Calambar, is past fighting age, and is in charge of Mulmaster's training and recruitment agents, the Hawks. The Hawks are an autonomous group whose members all share the rank of strikewhip; their experience levels and character classes are varied.

The remaining generals are listed below in rough order of influence (abbreviations are the same as those used in the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ *Adventures* hardback, see page 69 of that book for a list):

- *Kuirth "Mulhammer" Baeruim, NE hm F13, Watchmaster of the City (oversees policing and security within Mulmaster).*
- *Thiondred Calamabar, LN hm F16, Hawkmaster (oversees training and recruitment).*
- *Maergar Blackserpent, CE hm F16 oversees land patrols and guard posts around Mulmaster, and agents gathering information in other cities).*
- *Dulhoun Crestsilver, NE hm F14 (commands Mulmaster's naval forces on the Moonsea).*
- *Sakarra Shindol, NE hf F14 (oversees trade escorts and bodyguards, land and sea).*
- *Juldar "the Bald" Thomm, CE hm F13 (second to Maergar).*
- *Tzsorbar Thoul, NE hm F12 (second to Dulhoun).*
- *Jallaha Deirmar, NE hf F12 (second to Thiondred).*

The Cloaks

All known wizards (including illusionists) of fourth level or more must join the Cloaks if they wish to remain in the city for longer than six nights at a time, and more than a cumulative total of thirty nights in a season. Joining is a long and difficult process involving much magical investigation and testing of the applicants' inner thoughts and intentions. All non-Cloak mages are forbidden to practice even the smallest active magic while within the city walls. (Active magic includes spells, cantrips, and items that produce spell-like effects. Defensive items such as *rings of protection* are not prohibited.) Any transgression of this rule results in immediate arrest by a dozen soldiers reinforced by six or more powerful Cloaks. Seizure and confiscation of all spellbooks and magical items, and expulsion from the city invariably follows. Expulsion occurs only after thorough questioning (with magical aid) about the prisoner's deeds and intentions. If the interrogation uncovers anything actively hostile to Mulmaster or its ruling nobles, the prisoner is put to death.

The Cloaks are strictly ranked according to magical ability (experience level). They are issued magic items but may own them only with the permission of the Council, which seldom allows such items to be retained for long save by extremely dedicated and loyal Cloaks.

The Council consists of all Cloaks of twelfth level and above (currently twenty-nine people), and is led by the Senior Cloak, Thurndan Tallwand—a white-bearded, distinguished, and wantonly cruel Chaotic Evil human male 17th level wizard—and by the High Blade. Two other Blades sit on the Council, and all four of these top-ranking Councilors hold a veto over the Council's doings and decrees, with the High Blade's authority being absolute.

The Cloaks possess a wide variety of items, many of them seized from visiting adventurers. They specialize in pinpoint offensive spells and items (such as *wands of magic missiles*) and in surveillance magic, as befits their role as secret police. Cloaks are constantly monitoring the thoughts of those around them, and thereby police the loyalty of themselves and the city's soldiers most effectively. Diligent Cloaks who distinguish themselves are rewarded with free training to further their abilities, the permission to use

(and learn the secrets of) increasingly powerful magic, and holidays in the luxurious underground Palace of Revels beneath the High Blade's Tower. Wizards who leave the Brotherhood of the Cloak are deemed dangerously-well-informed traitors, and are hunted down—even to the far corners of the Realms—and slain.

Nobility and Titles

The nobles of Mulmaster are a set number of Lords—forty-nine—and their families, plus the "Archpriests" of the temples of certain deities, plus the ruling Blades (currently sixteen of these) and their families, and the ruling High Blade and his family. Family members are given the title-of-honor "Zor" (if male) or "Zora" (if female) if they are not Lords themselves. A female Lord is called a "Lord" in Mulmaster, not "Lady." The status of honor-titled nobles depends upon the titled noble of the family—if he or she is slain or cast down, they can lose their nobility overnight.

Wealth, lineage, and long residency in Mulmaster are certainly factors in becoming noble, but nobility is conferred by free, secret vote of all the Lords, Archpriests, and Blades (the High Blade may vote only to break a tie), all of whom may nominate candidates. In practice, however, Lords find an Archpriest or Blade of like mind to make the actual nomination. The Blades and High Blade have no veto over such elections.

A noble may become a Blade only by majority vote of the Blades (over which the High Blade has a veto). A majority vote of the Blades is also needed to "cast down" a Blade to the ranks of the nobility (sometimes temporarily swelling the ranks of Lords beyond forty-nine), or exile the Lord utterly, or put the Lord to death. An identical process is used to strip a Lord of title and nobility.

The High Blade (or other Lord) who wished to eliminate rivals or break up a cabal of opponents without all this voting, lobbying, and debate can simply have them slain by stealth. Care must be taken, however, not to overuse or flaunt this means of solving one's troubles. If Lords or Blades ever become so worried about their own skins that the need for self preservation overcomes their fears of retribution (the High Blade has informers everywhere and failed coups are common) they will unite to slay a High Blade who threatens them all. Thulsanna's predecessor, Deimos Mattercloak, who was known as "Bloodtongue" for the numerous times he ordered assassinations, was the victim of a successful coup.

Current Blades of Mulmaster include:

- *Ghondiir Helsavvin, CN hm W11, and member of the Council of the Cloaks.*
- *Ontthala Hulzammer, NE hf F6, one of the richest Mulmasterites currently living, through her inherited ownership of a merchant fleet of more than eighty ships. She is widely believed to be Selfaril's lover.*
- *Jhantalassa Imbritter, NE hf F15.*
- *Ulgor Jalth, CE hm F11.*
- *Thuilander Khaumair, LN hm F9.*
- *Buldaeran Maircambair, LN hm F16.*
- *Prusthip Melltrit, NE hm F17, a young and careful rival to Selfaril who is patiently building his own forces and allies for an eventual challenge.*
- *Kormarth Ulsant, a NE, hm F11.*
- *Delphinthar Zaltrim, LE hm W19 level, member of the Council of Cloaks.*

Particulars of other Blades are left to individual DMs.

The special powers and privileges of a noble include the title, a city-provided guard-of-honor around the noble's residence and around the noble's person, when in the streets or outside the city walls. The guard consists of one Cloak and eight bladesmen clad in full plate armor—which is known as "coat-of-plate" in the northern Realms. Nobles have the right to hire and have personal bodyguards of up to sixteen men-at-arms within the city walls, and to use a distinctive personal coat-of-arms, which the noble's family may wear and display. The noble's servants may wear a simplified version, and personal bodyguards are required to wear their employer's coat-of-arms when bearing weapons within the city walls. Nobles also are allowed to bring business before the Blades, who must meet at least one in the waxing of each moon (about once a month).

Blades are allowed all the privileges of nobles, a honor guard of nineteen soldiers and two Cloaks, the freedom to hire thirty-five bodyguards (often powerful adventurers in Sembia, Hillsfar, Tsurlagol, and Calaunt), and an annual salary of 10,000 pieces of gold, paid form the city treasury. (The High Blade gets 90,000 gp annually.)

Blades and their families also have luxurious, gigantic quarters in the sprawling Towers of the Blade; these are interconnected by bridges and tunnels. Blades also may maintain other residences in the city if they wish. The Towers of the Blade are serviced by a private (covered) canal and docks, which is guarded by a fortress-arch where the canal leaves the harbor.

Blades can refuse all challenges from those of lesser rank (and all non-Mulmasterites, regardless of rank) without losing honor; indeed, challenging a Blade is considered an insult to the city, whether the challenger knows the customs or that his foe is a Blade.

Current Clack

• Faerladeeyn, one of the most powerful of the satraps who rule the lands east of Ithal Pass (some call these sovereigns The Elder Caliyms), has issued a public warning to Manshoon of Zhentil Keep, who dwells the Moonsea lands far to the north. Faerladeeyn has declared that his Silk Blades are now at war with Manshoon's Zhentarim. Any agents or known allies of the Dark Network found anywhere in the lands about The Shining Sea will be slain on sight—if they're lucky.

Faerladeeyn is a noted adventurer, now publicly retired. A warrior of skill, he once stood alone against fourteen blades in a tavern in Tashluta, and emerged alive, after defeating all fourteen opponents. He is known to have amassed an impressive collection of magical swords.

The Elder Caliyms consider themselves the true power and spirit of The Lands of the Lions. They sneer at the proud but hollow, boastful upstarts of Calimport and at the present Calishite merchants, who swagger and squander riches in a land where money talks, and honor is silent. Both groups, say the Elder Caliyms are growing increasingly soft and blind to the world as it really is.

It is not known what reply Manshoon has made to Faerladeeyn's announcement, or even if he reacted to the news. Citizens of Zhentil Keep have reported seeing dead beholders rotting in alleys near the city walls, and finding small pieces of certain mages and priests of Bane carefully arranged down the center of a street one morning. The Zhentarim seem to be undergoing a period of internal difficulties again. ❑

The Circle Of Swords

A Ravens Bluff Logic Puzzle

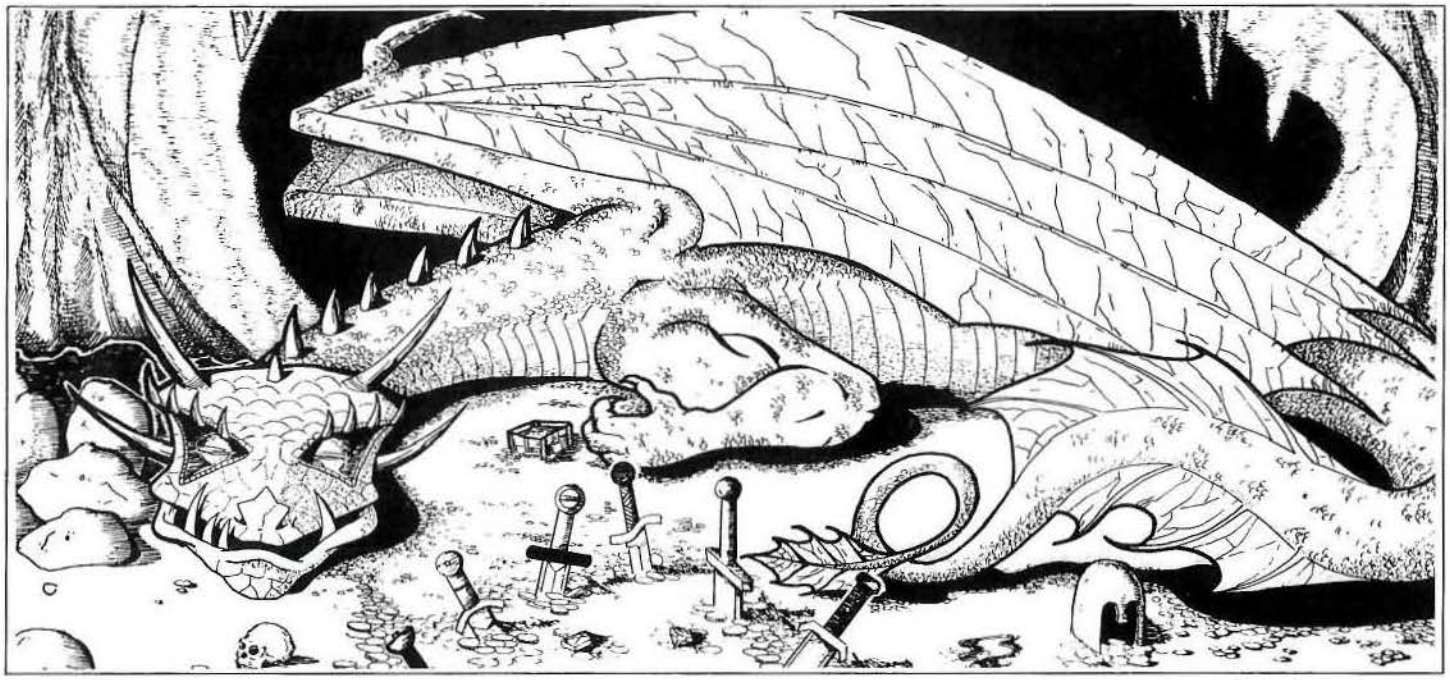


Illustration by Dave Zenz

by Rob Nicholls

Little is publicly known for certain about Lord Mayor Charles Oliver O'Kane before the Champions Games. However, O'Kane was obviously a very successful adventurer; tales and legends of his deeds are common among city bards and storytellers.

One such tale speaks of how, as a young man, O'Kane joined an adventuring company called the Lucky Numbers. This group was famous for its tendency to get into trouble—and yet somehow come out unscathed. O'Kane was with the company during its search for a blade called Scaleslicer. Supposedly a terrible bane to dragons, Scaleslicer was said to have been carried by a young knight to the lair of the dreaded dragon Infernos.

Neither knight nor sword was seen again.

The Lucky Numbers ventured into the dragon's lair and proceeded to outwit and outmaneuver each obstacle they encountered. As the story goes, the party was splashing along a damp corridor when O'Kane noticed the water smelled strange. Suddenly, with a burst of fire and pain, The Lucky Numbers' numbers were up.

Awakening later, O'Kane immediately realized three things—he was alive, he was flash-blinded, and something very big was growling at him. It was here, some say, that O'Kane's diplomatic skills came to light. Talking quickly, he was able to negotiate with Infernos so the dragon would give him a fighting chance. The dragon brought out a variety of swords, Scaleslicer among them, and then supposedly recited the following:

"You stand in the center
of a circle of swords.
Six in number,
the best of my hoards.
Each blade differs
in type and name
Metal and gemstone,
none is the same.
South behind lies Orctamer,
bastard sword to your face.
And it has a diamond
which many would chase.
The silver blade lies
across from khopesh type.
Giantmaimer is of electrum,
yet has not the ruby ripe.
Southwest is a sword
without amethyst stone,
yet Trollcrusher golden
boasts a gem white as bone.
The blade of platinum,
which lies southeasterly,
has an emerald stone,
green like a forest tree.
Demoncleaver is curved,
as is the one next to it.
Across lies the short one;
many has it split.
The broad one northeast
has no blackish rock.
Yet the bronze, by mithril,
has a sapphire of stock.
Gnollslayer is northwest,
next to one long and far.
While the one with obsidian
lies beside the scimitar.
The clues have been given
in the form I desire.
Choose quick and wisely now,
or meet your end in fire.

Obviously, O'Kane chose correctly. Can you? ❑

Crisis In The Cragmoors

An AD&D® 2nd Edition game scenario

Illustrated by Dave Zenz

by Chris Doyle

Terrain: Swamp/Moor
Party Levels: 42 (Average 7th)
Monster X.P.:
Kill: 9,000 Defeat: 11,000
Retreat: 4,500
Adventure goal X.P. (rescuing captive): 2,000

SetUp

* While the PCs were celebrating their most recent mission, a sorceress they know was captured by a giant troll. He grabbed her and ran toward the Cragmoors, killing one watchman and wounding another who came to her rescue.
* While on an extended wilderness adventure, the PCs have reason to consult a local sorceress (perhaps to get a magical item identified). When they arrive in her home village, however, they discover she has been kidnapped by a giant creature.
* The PCs stop at an inn for the night and are awakened when a marauding giant creature slays a watchmen and carries away the local sorceress. The townspeople are quick to enlist the PCs' aid in bringing her back to safety.

DM's Background

The PCs begin this adventure tracking the creature to its lair.

You can use this as a timed adventure to add suspense and excitement to your gaming session. If you do so, allow the players four hours of game time to find the sorceress. If they do not reach her within the time limit, the giant troll eats her for dinner (as that's what giant trolls do).

The numbered sections of text refer to places on the map where the PCs will have encounters.

1. The Tracks Begin

> It is a short walk to the town's front gate. The gate has been torn off its hinges, probably by the giant who came for a visit last night. Large tracks are clearly visible.

If a PC with tracking ability examines the tracks, he or she can tell they head west and then gradually move to the

north. Be aware of the PCs' marching order, and consult the map as they travel.

2. The Cragmoor Swamp

After a brisk half-hour walk, you note the solid ground is slowly becoming boggy. Soon the fetid stench of the swamp fills your nostrils. Mosquitoes swarm about you.

Patches of fog appear along the dotted landscape, and visibility is reduced by about half. The giant's tracks lead to a small game trail that enters the swamp. The trail is about five feet wide, and it only can be traversed single file.

The party has entered the Cragmoor Swamp. The characters must switch to a single-file marching order. Because of the dense foliage and boggy conditions, any character moving off the trail suffers the following penalties: −2 to hit, −1 on damage, and a movement rate of one-third normal. Any character spending more than three turns off the trail becomes stuck in the thick mud and begins to sink; The PC has four to five rounds to devise a way to get out of the mud. Otherwise, the PC drowns. Workable methods for getting free might include: Struggling out by sheer power (check vs. ½ Strength score) using a convenient vine or tree branch or perhaps a staff, military pick, or other weapon to get a purchase on firmer ground. The trapped character might wiggle free by shedding his heavy equipment (Dexterity check) and squirming/swimming out of trouble (½ Dexterity check). The wisest course, however, is getting a fellow PC to pull the trapped character free.

3. The River

The game trail, and the tracks, end at the bank of a sluggish river. The river spans perhaps 350 feet, with the game trail continuing on the opposite bank. The water is fairly murky, but you can see the bottom well enough to tell the riverbed is covered with fine sand. You also spot a school of fish.

If the PCs look, they can find a suitable place to ford the river. While the game trail does indeed continue on the opposite bank, the giant's tracks do not. (See the map for his true course.)

If the PCs follow the game trail, they accomplish nothing. After they have traveled for awhile point out they do not see the giant's tracks. To find the giant's tracks they have to return to the river and search along the banks until they find the trail (encounter 7).

4. The Bullywug Ambush

You are scouring the muddy river bank for giant tracks, being careful not to become stuck in the deep mud. The river, when you can see it through the patches of reeds, swirls lazily by; the water moving so slowly the sandy bottom is not disturbed. The insects are in greater force near the banks. They bite and annoy you. Several slime-covered willows can be seen a short distance from the bank.

A small tribe of bullywugs attacks the party. If the PCs blindly followed the game trail and had to return to the river to search for tracks, the bullywugs get a free ambush attack, *and* have a normal chance to surprise the party and get a second free attack. If a PC was watching the river, the party still gets ambushed, but the PCs get a +2 bonus to the surprise roll (see PHB, page 111). A bullywug scout noticed the PCs some distance back, and the bullywugs are ready. If the PCs were smart enough to search for tracks immediately after crossing the river, the bullywugs still attack, but the ambush fails. Roll normally for surprise, but the PCs still get a +2 bonus if somebody was watching the reeds.

On their first attack round, the bullywugs rise from the reeds and throw their spears. In the next round they close to melee. The party can flee at any time, as the bullywugs move slowly out of water and cannot keep up.

Bullywugs (20): Int Average; AL CE; AC 6; MV 3, Sw 15; HD 1; hp 5 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3 or 1 (weapon); Dmg 1-2/1-2/2-5 or 1-6 (spear); SA Hop; SD Camouflage; SZ M; ML 10; XP 65 each.

Bullywug Leader (1): Int Average; AL CE; AC 3 (thick leather armor); MV 3, Sw 9; HD 1; hp 8; THAC0 19; #AT 3 or 1 (weapon); Dmg 1-2/1-2/2-5 or 1-6 +1 (spear +1); SA Hop; SD Camouflage; SZ M; ML 12; XP 65.

The leader carries a pouch with 15 gp, and three gems worth 25 gp, 50 gp, and 85 gp.

5. Dropped Dagger

You continue following the river to the east. It' nearly noon, and the river sparkles. Near the bank, a piece of metal gleams in the sun, too. The river at this point is apparently deeper. You can see large dark spots in the water, indicating depth.

The sorceress dropped her dagger here, hoping any rescuers would find it, and that is the metal gleaming in the sun. Originally, she pointed the blade to indicate the direction of the giant's travel. However, the dagger has been discovered by a pair of river otters, who are taking turns moving the dagger to see which one of them can produce the most sparkles on the water. They also like the sparkling jewels in its hilt. The dagger is worth 1,200 gp.

The otters are friendly, curious, and hold their ground when the PCs approach. They have no intention of giving up the dagger. If the PCs take it, the otters pursue them, nipping at their heels, undoing their boot laces, and generally being annoying. The otters will settle for unusual food items or another shiny object in exchange for the dagger.

If a PC can *speak with animals*, the otters explain that a tall man with reddish-brown skin waded through the river and continued north. The man was carrying a club and a girl. The man wouldn't stop and play with them, but the girl was kind and dropped this nice, shiny object for them.

Otters (2): Int Semi-; AL N; AC 5; MV 12, Sw 18; HD 1-1; hp 4 each; THAC0 20; #AT 1; Dmg 1-2; SZ T; ML 8; XP nil.

6. Crayfish Attack

The otters from encounter five have disturbed a pair of giant crayfish, which are waiting for the otters to come back in the river and provide dinner. However, when the PCs arrive the crayfish forget the otters. The giant crayfish are hungry and see the PCs as a meal. They lie in wait in the reeds along the bank and attack as the PCs come close. If one crayfish is killed, the other attempts to retreat into the river.

You continue to head along the river, looking for the giant's tracks. Your water-logged feet begin to tire. You notice the dark patches in the river are becoming more common. You've passed several of them in the past few minutes. The river must be very deep here. Suddenly, two gray shapes rise from the water and move toward you. They are very large crayfish, and they brandish nasty-looking claws.

Giant Crayfish (2): Int Non; AL N; AC 4; MV 6, Sw 12; HD 4+4; hp 32 each; THAC0 15; #AT 2; Dmg 2-12/2-12; SD Surprise; SZ L; ML 13; XP 125 each.

7. The Tracks Continue

After dealing with the crayfish you press on, being slightly more cautious of your surroundings. Then, along the bank, you see it, a large footprint in the mud—the giant's tracks. The tracks head north into the swamp. Obviously you're on some sort of ancient road, as cobblestones become visible when you inspect the ground closely. No one has been on this road for years, it seems.

The PCs have found the correct tracks. The ancient road was used by traders before the swamp lands became too dangerous to travel. It is now used by the giant troll and many wild animals.

8. The Bridge

It has been nearly an hour since you found the road. The swamp now appears very gloomy, and the environment begins to dampen your spirits. This deep into the swamp, you're surrounded by moss-covered, overfed trees that loom above and blot out the sun. You feel clammy and slimy and the swarms of pesky insects are worse than ever.

The giant's tracks follow the road right into the heart of the swamp. Eventually, you arrive at a clearing with a wooden bridge, approximately 50 feet long. It spans a particularly large mire of mud flats. The mud does not look safe and appears to be quite deep. The bridge is old, yet is in good condition. Its wooden timbers are covered with moss and foul-smelling swamp plants. The giant's tracks lead across the bridge.

Normally, the bridge would be safe. However, Gruck, the giant, has turned the bridge into a trap. He weakened the center supports with an axe, while the mudmen living in the mire futilely attacked him.

When 200 pounds of weight are on the bridge, it will collapse, sending party members into the mud. Those standing at the edge of the bridge can make checks vs. Dexterity −2 to avoid falling into the mud. PCs do not suffer damage from the fall, however PCs in the mud have to deal with the mudmen.

The mudmen begin their assault by hurling blobs of mud. The mud is three-feet deep, and characters in the mud suffer the following: lose one-third their movement rate and −1 on all to hit, and damage rolls.

Mud-man (8): Int Non; AL N; AC 10; MV 3; HD 2; hp 12 each; THAC0 19; #AT 1; Dmg Special; SA Mud-throwing, suffocation; SD immune to mind-affecting spells, *transmute rock to mud* slays (no save), *dispel magic* and *dig* act as *fireball;* SZ S; ML Special; XP 175 each.

Mudmen hurl blobs of mud at their opponents, who are considered AC 10 (modified by Dexterity). The mud hardens on impact and slows the target's movement rate by 1 for each hit. A mudman, if within 10 feet of a target, can hurl itself at the target. A successful hit means the death of a mudman, but slows the victim's movement by 4. Once a victim has a movement rate of 0, he becomes immobilized and suffocates in five rounds unless the mud is removed from around his nose.

On the other side of the bridge, the giant's trail splits, one set of tracks (which is older) lead to the east and to Encounter 10. The other set continues to the north and likely will lead the PCs to Encounter 9.

9. Lizardmen No Matter What

Following this branch of the trail, you see the giant's tracks veer to the east. Another set of tracks goes to the northwest. Which do you follow?

A pair of lizardmen spotted the PCs moving through The Cragmoors, noted they were following large footprints, and set up a false trail that leads to the northwest. Lizardmen like to take human captives for slaves, and have determined that this bunch would make a good group of laborers.

Farther along their falsified trail the lizardmen have placed moss, branches, and small blobs of mud over a deep pit. If the PCs follow the false trail, they fall into the pit. The 15-foot deep pit is set up so that the top will not collapse until several characters walk on it.

Once the PCs are in the pit, the lizardmen point spears at them and throw large blobs of mud to keep them from climbing out.

If the PCs do not follow the false trail, the lizardmen group together, follow the PCs, and attack to subdue. Dead humans make bad slaves, so they want to keep the PCs alive.

In either case, when the lizardmen have the advantage over the PCs, continue with the following:

"Humans. Drop your weapons and surrender to us. We want you as slaves, not dead humans."

Also in the lizardmen band is a lizard king who was wounded in a one-on-one fight with a warrior. The king won, but was seriously hurt in the process.

The only way the PCs can get out of this encounter with their necks intact is to bargain for their release. For example, if the PCs offer to heal the lizard king, they will be allowed to leave. The PCs might also win their freedom by concocting a plausible story about a vast treasure, a village full of potential slaves, or something else that might induce the lizard men to take the PCs away from the village with something less than 50 guards.

Lizard Men (50): Int Low; AL N; AC 5; MV 6, Sw 12; HD 2+1; hp 11 each; THAC0 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-6; SZ M; ML 14; XP 65 each.

Lizard king (1): Int Average; AL N; AC 3; MV 9, Sw 12; HD 8; hp 50 (8 currently); THAC0 13; #AT 1; D 5-20; SA Skewer; SD Nil; SZ L; ML 16; XP 975.

If the PCs help the lizard king, the lizardmen ask what they were doing following the giant's tracks. The lizardmen tell the PCs they saw a giant tak-

ing a female captive to the north. They point out the trail. The lizardmen had no desire to fight the giant for one woman.

10. The Trail Ends

The trail continues on the opposite side of the bridge.

The area becomes increasingly overgrown, and the trees—magnificent willows—are becoming more abundant and more wholesome-looking. Brambles fight with marsh grass to dominate the terrain. The trail becomes harder to follow and eventually disappears.

There is nothing of interest here. The PCs will have to double back to the bridge and pick up the trail to continue.

11. Snagged

Shortly after you leave the lizardmen and pick up the giant's trail, you come upon another sluggish river. This one is larger and slightly deeper, with few fish swimming about. You find a ford, however, and cross easily. On the opposite bank you notice the trail is becoming more difficult to follow. The ground is hard-packed here, making the giant's tracks tough to see. Many vines climb up the trees and hang all about. The foliage is thick, with dark shapes—likely large clumps of leaves, scattered in the trees. You've entered a very dense and quiet part of The Cragmoors.

Starting with the first character in the marching order, have each PC make a Dexterity check. The first one to fail the check is caught in a snare. A snared PC is held about four feet off the ground, one foot firmly caught in a web loop. If all PCs successfully avoid the snares, they likewise avoid this encounter.

If a PC is caught, two giant spiders climb down webs to attack the party. At the same time, an ettercap hiding above in a tree drops a net on a PC; treat this net as a *web* spell since it is made of spider webs. The net can only catch one character. If successful, the ettercap reels in the snared victim, taking two rounds to reel, and a third round to bind the character in sticky webs high in a tree. Snared characters can attack the ettercap once before becoming immobilized, at −2 to hit.

Ettercap (1): Int Low; AL NE; AC 6; MV 12; HD 5; hp 25; THAC0 15; #AT 3; Dmg 1-3/1-3/1-8; SA Poison; SD Traps; SZ M; ML 13; XP 975.

Ettercaps have a poisonous bite. The poison is highly toxic. If the victim does not successfully save against poison, he dies in 1-4 rounds.

Giant Spiders (2): Int Low; AL CE; AC 4; MV 3, Wb 12; HD 4+4; hp 22 each; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA bite has type F poison; SZ L; ML 13; 650 each.

11. Watch Lizards

As you continue to press north, following the giant's tracks, the swamp becomes even more dense. The tracks made by the giant turn off the trail and head right into the marsh. After a quick search, you determine these tracks are fairly fresh. The giant must be close.

After what seems like forever, you see a very unnatural clearing. Several trees have been chopped down in a crude fashion to form the clearing. On the opposite side is a large mound of mud, rocks, trees, dirt, and clay. There is a large opening in the makeshift hill.

The giant's tracks lead right into the cave, and more of the same tracks can be seen scattered about.

This indeed is Gruck's lair. He built it himself and is quite proud of it. The clearing is roughly 60 feet across. No unusual sounds can be heard in the area. However, if the PCs make noise, the sound will certainly carry.

Gruck has a crude, but effective alarm system. He captured two giant lizards while they were young and keeps them for pets. They live on the hill and are hiding up there now. Each has a 15-foot rope tied about its neck. This is secured to the hill itself, near the opening. The rope prevents them from wandering off.

Gruck doesn't feed the lizards as often as he should, so when a PC enters within range of the ropes, the lizards leap to attack, alerting Gruck in the process.

Giant Lizards (2): Int Non; AL N; AC 5; MV 15; HD 3+1; hp 18, 15; THAC0 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1-8; SA Special (double damage is scored on a natural 20); SZ H; ML 8; XP 270 each.

12. Gruck's Lair

The cave is quite damp and it slopes downward gradually. The corridor walls glisten with dampness. After about 50 feet of twisting and turning, you enter a dark chamber. The chamber is perhaps 40 feet across at its widest point, and its walls are very irregular. There is a large pile of mangy furs at the far end of the room. Next to the furs is a crude table but no chairs, a small chest, and two buckets. A few crates of moldy food lie nearby.

The buckets contain drinking water, and the furs smell bad (Gruck's bed). Characters watching the furs should attempt a Wisdom check. Success reveals movement. Gruck is hiding there. Gruck, if unnoticed, attacks with surprise any character who comes close to the table or the chest. He will first reach out with claws, then melees with his club.

Giant Two-headed Troll (1): Int Average; AL CE; AC 2; MV 12; HD 10; hp 68; THAC0 11; #AT 3; Dmg 5-8/5-8/1-12; SA Special; SD Regeneration; SZ L; ML 16; XP 3,000.

Gruck regenerates 3 hit points per round beginning in the third round after he is damaged. He wears thick, crude skins, which improve his armor class, and he carries a pet rock the size of a grapefruit (a *luckstone*).

Gruck lost one of his heads several years ago, and it never grew back

When Gruck is dealt with, the sorceress can be found in a shallow alcove—gagged, bruised, but otherwise unhurt (unless the adventure took longer than four hours of game time, in which case she's been eaten).

The troll's chest is unlocked and contains his treasure: 2,576 gp, 941 sp, two necklaces (one gold, one silver) worth 4,880 gp and 1,950 gp respectively, a *dagger +3*, a *short sword +2*, and a potion bottle of green liquid. This is swamp water, if tasted the imbiber must save vs. poison or be ill for 2-5 days. ❑

The Living Galaxy

Flawed Gems Shine The Brightest

by Roger E. Moore

Arorrbar-Harroga was born about 12 years ago as part of a play-by-mail campaign based on GDW's *Traveller* game. He was a silver-furred Vargr, one of the "wolf-people" of the *Traveller* game's galaxy, and he was a particularly weak and scruffy Vargr as well. His physical statistics were abysmal; a fall down a short flight of stairs would have sent him to a hospital. He lived on the wrong side of the law, flying pirate cruisers on raids against merchant and military spacecraft. He retired far into Vargr middle age with only a shotgun, body armor, a handful of cash, and a desperate need to run. Old enemies, bounty hunters, law-enforcement officers, and the military forces of two empires hunted him across a dozen worlds. He was a nonhuman deep within unfriendly human space. And he was wasting away from the effects of disease and old age.

Consigned to a dusty character folder for a decade, Arorrbar returned to life last year for a *MegaTraveller* campaign. He was even older now and much weaker; a bad fall had a good chance of killing him, and he was racked with chills. His money, friends, and steady job had vanished in the holocaust of an alien revolt. Thrown together with the remnants of human Marine and Navy units, he escaped on a starship with nothing but a filthy spacesuit and some weapons and ammo—to embark on even more dangerous adventures in hostile space.

Although physically weak, Arorrbar was bright and well educated. His years with the space raiders had won him an incredible level of starship-piloting skill (Pilot-7). He could fly almost any spacecraft in existence and knew stunts that made other pilots turn white with terror. His "piracies" were flown against forces that had murdered his parents, and he could rest knowing they had been avenged.

And Arorrbar had style.

He knew how to drive the humans around him crazy, and he also knew how to make those humans laugh. Children of any race found him to be a warm ally full of stories, and female Vargr found him irresistible. He enjoyed excitement too much to care about death. He was one of my favorite characters in any role-playing game, and I loved him, flaws and all.

The moral is simple: *Perfection is boring.* And this can be a hard lesson to swallow. Many gamers are uncomfortable running anything but player characters who are never ruffled, frightened, nor shaken. Their PCs' statistics are flawless, their skills maxed out, and their teeth straight. (These PCs often have lots of money, weapons, and special talents, too.) Perfection is easy, safe, and secure.

But perfection is boring. And perfection is deadly to role-playing of any sort. Perfect characters have nothing to live for. No one believes in them or in what they do. They never breathe. They never get hurt. They never rise above their chains and fight and know heroism.

Fantasy role-playing games are the RPGs most prone to the perfection syndrome; impossibly strong barbarians and godlike wizards stalk many a dungeon corridor. Science-fiction RPGs have their little gods, too: iron-muscled mercenaries who never miss a shot, psionic masters who see into every mind, nobles with no end of wealth or influence, powered-armor knights who walk through nuclear hail to deliver gunloads of death, and so on. They are strong, invulnerable, and handsome, but they are flat, trite, and dull.

The cold touch of perfection denies a character a soul. Does that character have any real flaws or fears? What skeletons haunt a heroine when she goes to sleep? For what secrets would a dauntless adventurer gladly die to keep hidden from public view?

No gem was ever cut that had no flaw. And no hero of light was ever born who did not know darkness.

Trouble in the Making

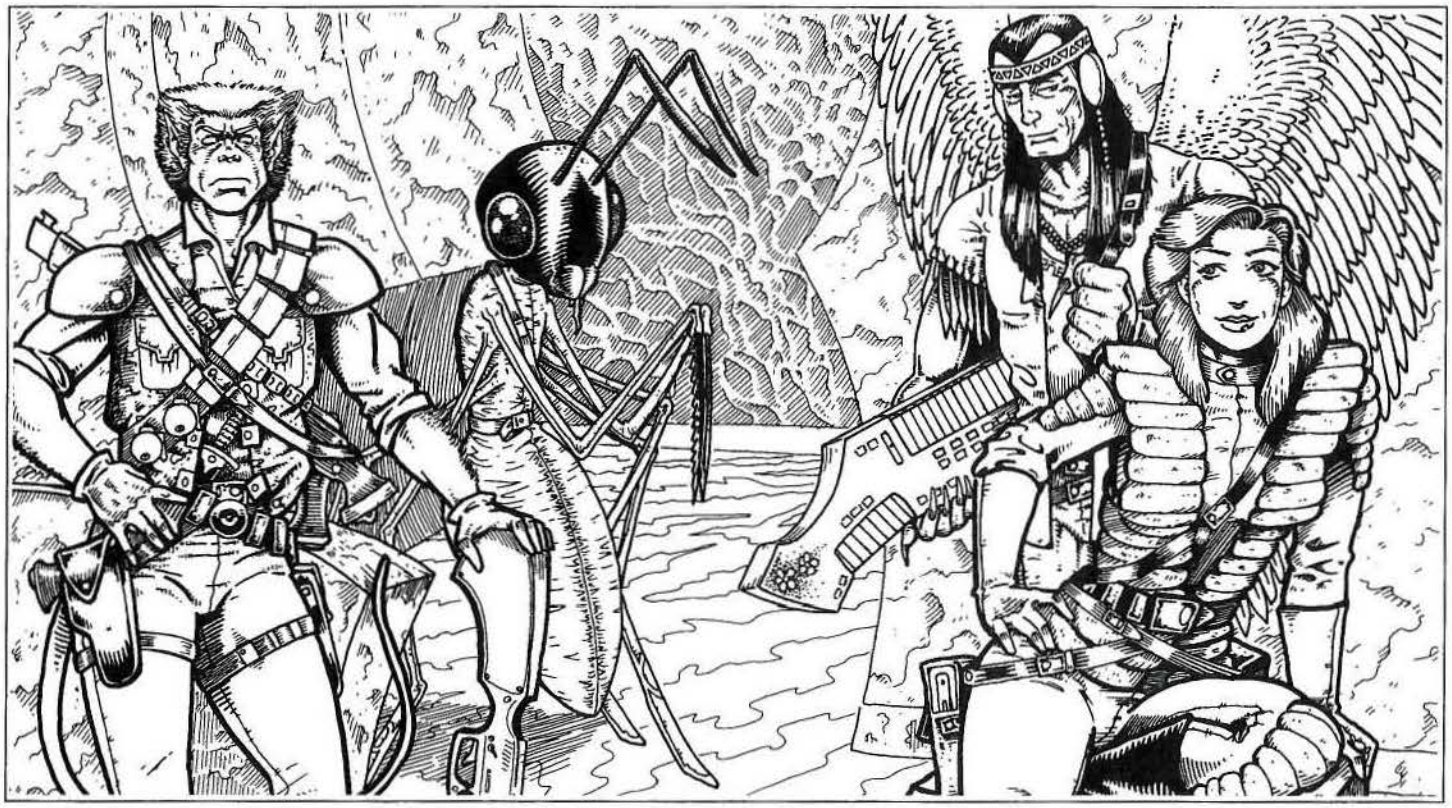
A character's personal flaws and problems can come from many sources. Some science-fiction games give your character an armload of trouble right from the start. R. Talsorian Games, for example, has fantastic character-creation systems for its *Cyberpunk 2020* and *Mekton II* games. Your hero can start a game being chased by a crime mob, suffering from a tragic love affair, or undergoing any number of other horrible situations that will easily provide role-playing fodder for years to come. By all means, find copies of these games if you want some intense character cues. (Best of all, these character-background systems can be used with *any* science-fiction game!)

Other science-fiction role-playing games let you generate your character's past almost year by year, as do GDW's *Traveller* and *MegaTraveller* games, giving you the chance to creatively design the rough spots in your character's past. Say that Miriam Silverstar gained a Revolver-1 skill in her second year as a scout. Did she buy a gun and learn to use it after she was beaten up and robbed at a starport? Was she issued the gun when she went on a secret and dangerous mission for the Scout Service? Had she taken up smuggling as a side career and needed some protection? You decide on the secret she will carry with her. (This was the method I used to develop a history for Arorrbar-Harroga.)

Science-fiction games that simply produce a character with statistics and skills—but no history—leave you free to design any past and present problems you wish for your starship pilot, military officer, or what have you. The lack of a framework can be daunting, but it can allow you to be creative, vivid, and daring.

Of course, you will have to work out the details on your character's batch of troubles with the GM in any case, so that your character's problems are reasonable as well as fitted to the campaign. ("No, you can't be the missing heir to the throne of the Galactic Emperor, no matter how many assassins are chasing you.")

Flaws and problems give a hero something to strive for or against, something to overcome in his search for greatness. The greater a hero's strengths, the greater should his flaws be—and the greater the risks he must run should those flaws be revealed.



by Andrew Ellis

A Matter of Taste

It is important to point out here that just because you give your character certain flaws doesn't mean you approve of those problems in real life. We all hate drug addiction, but a character could be a recovering alcoholic who must fight the urge to turn to the bottle. We all regard theft as a criminal act, but a character could have grown up as a thief in a decaying slum, stealing and robbing just to feed his family and himself. We despise traitors, but a character could be an army commander who surrendered to an overwhelming enemy force and was thereafter cursed and hated by his people—though he saved tens of thousands of lives and kept his lands and people from destruction.

Selecting flaws and problems for a player character in a science-fiction role-playing game is a personal thing. The flaws you choose should be suited to your own vision of what the character is like. I could not see Arorrbar as an alcoholic, for example; he lives too fully to want to dampen or drown his feelings. I have an easier time giving him problems that he created. His thrilling youth as a space raider is catching up with him in every way. He is hunted, ill, and friendless. He'd be better off retiring on a backwater world near a nice hospital. But he still responds to the thrill of danger, and he willingly pays the price for it.

When choosing flaws, you should also make sure they do not cripple your character by making him unplayable. A hero with a problem should still be capable and likeable enough to suit you, and should have some chance to overcome his predicament in time (a *long* time, perhaps, but in time nonetheless). For example, a soldier who always freezes, faints, surrenders, or runs away during combat has a terrible flaw, and it will almost certainly either get him killed or thrown out of an adventuring party. A soldier who has a chance to fight his fear, perhaps gaining a die roll to avoid falling prey to his terror, is much more likeable and has a better chance of survival.

Better still, give the soldier other options for showing his overwhelming fear of enemy fire. He could run just far enough to hide and wildly throw grenades, fall prone and fire back with his eyes shut, or fire back while calling for help on the radio from any force within listening distance. He could be grossly superstitious, carrying a bizarre assortment of lucky items, wards, charms, potions, and real-life protections like a heavy flak jacket with steel plates sewn into it. He could become suicidally brave, his terror causing him to charge out and blindly attack the enemy with every weapon available to him (this should be a very rare reaction, for obvious reasons, though as a heroic last-ditch act it is hard to beat).

Roots Long and Deep

A character's problems should be well established, arising logically from events in the character's life. Let's create an interstellar mercenary, Captain Hugh Taggart, and give him the iron muscles and deadly aim suggested earlier. He has courage, charm, skills, and weapons. What flaws will make him human? Consider these options:

1. Hugh Taggart is very young, only 18. He gained his officer's commission on the battlefield when his entire chain of command was wiped out. Though well trained and seemingly brave, he has little leadership ability or tactical knowledge, and he greatly fears the

responsibilities of command. Thus far he has pulled through by luck, by following the advice of others, and by delegating command functions to his subordinates. But the war is long, and he has been a captain for only a short time; he suspects his luck will run out very soon. He wishes more than anything that he could become a corporal again, but he cannot leave his position without risking a court-martial for incompetence.

Hugh avoids contact with his own superiors unless he finds someone he trusts; he will then follow this person's every direction. He does all he can to keep his troops out of direct combat so he will not be responsible for their deaths. By himself, he is competent under fire. But if put in charge of troops in combat, without assistance, he fears he will make a fatal tactical error. Then, too, he has many of the problems that an 18-year-old has, and these make his life even more difficult. He is homesick, has a girlfriend he hasn't seen in months, and feels awkward and out of control of his life. Given time, training, and experience, he will make an excellent soldier nonetheless—if he survives.

2. Following a major battle, Hugh Taggart was unjustly accused of desertion and cowardice, stripped of his officer's rank, and dishonorably discharged from the Space Marines. The incident, in which he was sent on a sniper mission from a fortification only minutes before it was destroyed by ground fire, caused an uproar in his unit. Hugh has been unable to clear his name by any means. He alone knows he acted honorably and under the orders of his now-dead superior. The years have eaten at his self-confidence and pride, and he avoids discussing his past with even close friends. Though he has traveled far with mercenary units to escape the stigma, at any time he fears someone will remember him (he refuses to change his name or appearance).

If Hugh knows his friends have found out about his past, he becomes depressed and anxious, fearing the worst. Though he would also like to get married and settle down, his wife left him during his court-martial and he has trouble bringing himself to trust people again. Hugh hates to see anything having to do with the Space Marines, though it is his secret wish to be able to clear his name and face his past with pride. He can't change his past or other people's opinions, but he can change himself to overcome his troubles.

3. Hugh was taken prisoner during savage ground fighting on a minor world. He suffered terrible privations and torture for seven years before being rescued. After hospitalization, Hugh was honorably discharged from the military, only to enter a mercenary army as an advisor because he felt comfortable with military life and needed the money.

Even now, Hugh has frequent nightmares about his years in captivity. He has flashbacks at irregular intervals and thinks for a few terrifying seconds that he is once again a prisoner. He cannot stand small enclosed spaces or the sight of sharp knives. Co-workers find him to be jumpy, hyperalert, and difficult to get to know. Military doctors prescribed a nonaddictive medication to help calm his nerves, but he takes too much of the medication when he is having an especially bad time; this causes his reaction time to slow down, and he doesn't think as quickly as usual.

Though he is handsome, Hugh's eyes are dark and haunted, and he avoids looking at people directly. Extensive surgery has healed most of the injuries he sustained as a POW. A transplant gave him a new left eye, though it sometimes doesn't feel quite right, and he rubs it often. He is missing two fingers on one hand and one finger on the other. Scars crisscross his body from both surgery and old tortures.

All that Hugh wants now is to lead a normal life, but he cannot—nor will he ever. Yet he might achieve greatness by facing both danger and his own fears on his long road through the galaxy.

Surprise! Danger's Knocking

Not all of a character's problems need be created before the game starts. Some might develop during the game itself, fueled by the game master. The player should develop a reasonable response to the terrors that confront his character, not simply tossing them off as being no worse than colds. Many adventures can give characters the edge they need to rise above nothingness.

Alcyone-1215, for example, is a character whose problems were developed by the GM, not the player. Her player will have to work out the details of her reactions to these troubles, but the GM is responsible for creating and playing all the NPCs and situations that torment her from adventure to adventure. Troublesome NPCs need not show up all the time, but their presence will never be forgotten.

To the world at large, Alcyone-1215 is an attractive, outgoing, free-lance reporter for an interstellar news agency. (She has a number in her name because she is from a society of clones.) She loves to travel, has lots of ready cash, and is at home in almost any environment. She was even created to have some telepathic talents, and her player wants her to be a spy. This character doesn't seem to have a care in the universe, and she is in grave danger of being boring. What sorts of trouble can she be given to fix that?

For this situation, the game master adds a few notes to Alcyone's background. On a number of worlds, she makes side trips to various embassies and strategic locations on the pretext of being a tourist or a pilot on leave. There, she does a little mind-reading and gets an idea of the current political and military situations, determining if the world in question presents a danger to the interstellar government she represents. Alcyone's only flaw, it seems, is naivete; she assumes that her life of travel and espionage will go on forever, her cover is airtight, and she need never worry about the consequences of her actions.

Alcyone is allowed to be role-played for several game sessions with other PCs, secretly going about her business (by way of passing notes to the GM) while she and her PC allies have the usual sorts of adventures. Meanwhile, the GM shapes the pit of horror into which Alcyone is about to plunge. The GM decides to confront Alcyone the Invulnerable with her own personal demon, a foe of such power that she has little chance of defeating him for a long time to come, if ever. The following scenario develops:

The PCs land on a pleasant world they've visited often, and Alcyone runs off on her own for a bit, as usual. Walking into the suburban flower shop where she normally meets her contact to report on her latest mission, Alcyone finds no one at the front desk. So she wanders into the back room and stumbles over the bodies of the three shop workers, all of them intelligence agents, who have been shot execution-style. No money was taken from the cashbox. No evidence shows who committed the murders. Thoroughly shaken, she starts to leave to get back to her friends. Then Alcyone suddenly senses another telepathic mind is approaching. It's the murderer. She can tell he knows all

about her, he knows she's there—and she's next on his hit list.

With luck, the GM should be able to pull off a mad chase scene as Alcyone tries to make it back to her ship and allies before the heavily armed killer and his henchmen find her. Alcyone can tell that the killer is a far better telepath than she. He's confident and dedicated to murdering her. Beyond that, she knows nothing about him.

No matter where she goes, the killer and his helpers track her. Nothing stops them. They are agents for a rival power that was able to place a mole in the organization for which Alcyone works, and the mole has sold out everyone in his section to the enemy. The agency is now under attack in a widespread secret war conducted on half a dozen worlds. The killer found out about Alcyone, went to her contact point on the day she was to arrive, read the minds of the agents there, then killed them and waited for her. He does not know how skilled Alcyone is as a telepath, though he knows she isn't as powerful as he is. She cannot be allowed to live. The killer is patient and extremely smart, and he knows how to find out almost anything given time.

Future adventures might revolve around Alcyone's attempts to contact other members of her agency to get help. Failing that, she will have to run as fast and far as she can, or else find some way to take on the killer and his forces. How much of her troubles she decides to share with her fellow PCs is another problem. Should she tell them anything at all? Will they even believe her? Can they be of any help?

And every day she will live with the knowledge that somewhere in space is a killer whose face she has never seen, but who knows all there is to know about her. Her paranoia can take many forms. She might wear heavy body armor and learn to use hand weapons. She might change her name and appearance, leading an entirely new life (perhaps even arranging a fake death for her old identity). She might search for other members of her agency to gain help—only to find that there is no one left to turn to. She and her allies are on their own.

Alcyone-1215 has been saved from a dreary, trouble-free life of perfection, and so has everyone who comes into contact with her. As battle after battle with the rival agency is fought, Alcyone will gain new depth and dimensions. Her seemingly hopeless war for survival might be the thread linking many adventures in the galactic campaign. She will be tested by fire, poured into a new mold. If she survives, she will never be the same, dull, perfect character again.

This assumes, of course, that the player is willing to accept this new life for the character. If not—well, at least the GM tried.

Ganging Up On You

Most of us have problems that don't threaten our lives every single day or aren't based on horrible past traumas. We just accumulate little troubles and medium-sized predicaments, and they come together to make life more troublesome (but interesting) all around. In fact, it might be best to give a character lots of lesser problems instead of one huge one. If you can tie some of those problems to other player characters, then all the better. Now everyone can share the same mess, which will really fire up the role-playing.

For our example, we'll create Martyn Hoffman, the youngest son of a highly religious family of pacifists. His church is widely known, though not powerful in any sense. When he was an adolescent, Martyn's forehead was marked with a tattoo of a green star, the symbol of his church. The mark cannot be fully removed without surgery, which Martyn cannot afford. He's decided not to try to remove it anyway, for reasons he has trouble explaining (even to himself).

Martyn joined a mercenary army unit after a prolonged series of fights with his parents about his personal beliefs. After his stint, he became a free-roving bodyguard and adventurer. Some members of his family have disowned him, and others still write wrenching letters to him, begging him to reconsider his career and to return home to the family's church commune. Worse yet, his family has been in touch with branches of his church in other solar systems, and everywhere he goes there is sure to be a minister asking about him.

To make matters worse, Martyn's cousin, a young woman named Jolene Hoffman, was so impressed with his philosophy and dedication that she has also left home to become an interstellar adventurer. Martyn's feelings toward his cousin Jolene are much like those of an overprotective older brother. He feels personally responsible for her having left home, and he is terrified something awful will happen to Jolene if he lets his guard down. Of course, since Jolene is attractive enough to draw suitors, Martyn has become heavy handed in his dealings with anyone he finds in her company—a situation Jolene doesn't always appreciate.

Martyn and Jolene are both player characters—and so is Nigel MacFarland, a merchant prince who is Martyn's best friend and a potential suitor for Jolene. So is Gorgon, a nonhuman alien who works as a scout for the group and is being paid by Martyn's family to keep an eye out for his safety. So is Jett Blue, the ship's gunner, a quiet woman who is secretly in love with Martyn but can't stand his obsession with Jolene. Jolene, Nigel, Gorgon, and Jett have other problems not involving Martyn, of course, but having everyone's private business dovetail at some point can make for memorable games.

Beyond the SF Barrier

A lot of people base the personalities and problems of their science-fiction role-playing characters on purely SF sources. It isn't unusual to see variant Luke Skywalkers and Han Solos running around in a game, but you *can* do better. To really stretch your creativity, look at sources completely outside the SF field for new ideas to use with your characters. A few examples follow:

—*Azure Bonds,* by Jeff Grubb and Kate Novak. This is a fantasy novel in which the heroine, Alias, finds that she is *not* just a normal human female adventurer. She is actually an artificially created being who is being manipulated by powerful sorcerers and monsters for their own ends. What about a science-fiction hero who finds he is the clone of a powerful dictator, and the dictator is trying to hunt him down and use him as a decoy against rival forces? Or a hero who finds he is a robot or android made to look perfectly human, and that his creators are using him for some evil purpose that he cannot guess? Threatening a hero's very identity is a powerful "push" for any character.

—*Mythology,* by Edith Hamilton. This book, which some of you may have read in high-school humanities courses, discusses the most famous Greek heroes and heroines. There's Odysseus, a soldier who tries to reach his distant home but must face terrible dangers on the way. There's Hercules, a powerful man who must undergo incredible trials to atone for his sins. There's Jason, who led a great company of heroes in search

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With Great Power

Playing the Game—Of Playing With the Rules

by Dale A. Donovan

I'm a big fan of the game, but in my years of playing and GMing the system, I've come across a few minor problems. Being a rules-tinkerer by nature, I've come up with some solutions. They should help you get more enjoyment out of this terrific game.

Problem Powers

Invisibility and **phasing:** While the power-rank system used in the game handles most superhuman abilities very well, there are a few problem powers to which ranks don't seem to apply. How can one hero (with a higher rank) be more invisible or less tangible than someone else with the same power but a lower rank? Simply put, the first hero isn't more invisible or less tangible than the second hero. Ranks for these two powers come into play only in certain circumstances.

Heroes with **invisibility** are automatically invisible only to the eyes of humans and animals. A dog could smell or hear the hero, a security camera could pick up some distortion around the hero, and infrared goggles (while I would rule they cannot detect the hero) could possibly see the residual heat left on the floor from the hero's feet, etc. When attempting to determine whether some nonhuman or nonvisual sensory device detects an invisible hero, use the power's rank to make a FEAT roll against the rank of the device. (See the "Hardware" section of the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Advanced Set's *Player's Book* for details on technological items and ranks.) If the roll is successful, then the device did not detect the hero.

Similarly, ranks come into play when a hero attempts to phase through a wall, for example. Make a FEAT roll using the **phasing** rank against the material rank of the item to be phased through. Success means that the hero can pass through the material.

In both cases above, and whenever a "roll versus" a rank is called for, I recommend using the "Automatic FEATs" and "Impossible FEATs" rules mentioned on page 15 of the *Player's Book*. These prevent "unrealistic" things from occurring in the game.

Energy Control powers: Each of these powers gives a hero the ability to manipulate a form of energy without allowing him the ability to generate that energy. In most cases, this isn't a big problem if the GM allows the hero access to some source of that energy. For example, there would be no problem with manipulating gravity, since gravity is a fundamental force of the universe. I allow my players to select a power that generates the same type of energy their heroes can control, as long as they do not exceed the total number of powers rolled for their heroes. This is absolutely necessary with the Energy Control power **Darkforce Manipulation,** as there usually is very little of this other-dimensional energy just lying around.

Lightning Speed: Two problems with this power are that the hero gains no initiative bonus for possessing such a power, and the hero cannot make any extra attacks in a combat round.

The first problem is solved by consulting the Initiative Modifier Table on page 14 of the *Player's Book* and using the power's rank number in place of the hero's Intuition. This will give the hero an appropriate reaction-time bonus. Note that this power-rank initiative bonus will replace the hero's Intuition bonus, unless the Intuition bonus is higher. The same is true for any Agility initiative bonus (see below).

The second problem can be solved by allowing heroes with this power to develop a "multiple attacks" power stunt. Use the power rank or a character's Fighting +1CS (whichever is higher) and roll to take "Multiple Combat Actions" as per the *Player's Book,* page 30. This is identical to the "Extra Attacks" power in the *Player's Book,* but read on for a change to that power.

Extra Attacks: I suggest changing this power so it automatically gives a hero one (not having to roll, as per page 30) extra attack per round—without any column shift penalties. Selecting this power multiple times gives one extra attack each time the power is taken. To avoid abuse I caution GMs to set some arbitrary limit on the number of times this power can be taken (twice is the limit in my campaign).

Combat Contentions

Again, the MARVEL SUPER HEROES system handles combat very well, but the following rules add some "chrome" without slowing the combat process.

Surprise: The game has no surprise rules. A simple solution is have each hero make an Intuition roll when an unexpected attack occurs to see if he is surprised for that round. If he fails the roll, he is surprised. The rules for "Blindsiding" attacks on page 30-31 of the *Player's Book* then apply to the hero for that combat round. The hero can act normally in the next round. If the Intuition roll is successful, the hero is not surprised and can act immediately. Also refer to the "Blindsiding" section to determine what constitutes an "unexpected attack."

Initiative: As with the **Lightning Speed** power, the MARVEL SUPER HEROES system does not give an initiative bonus for those heroes with high Agility scores. Consult the Initiative Modifier Table on page 14, using the hero's Agility to determine his initiative bonus. Compare this bonus to the bonuses, if any, for the hero's Intuition and **Lightning Speed,** and take the highest single bonus as the initiative modifier. This method gives the hero the best possible bonus without adding potentially huge modifiers to the initiative roll.

Density Attack: Many heroes with the power **Density Manipulation-self** want to attack foes using Vision's power stunt of reducing his density, inserting his hand into a foe, and then partially resolidifying his hand. Note two things: **Density Manipulation-self** does not allow a hero to pass through physical objects—like bodies, and; Vision also has the **Phasing** power, that allows a hero to pass through solid objects. I have ruled any hero who wishes to use this "density attack" must have both **Density Manipulation-self and Phasing.** Otherwise, this power stunt works as described under **Density Manipulation-self.**

Strangulation attacks: An attacker wishing to strangle a foe must attack on the Grappling column and achieve a Partial Hold or better. Any victim of a strangulation attack must make a suc-

cessful Endurance FEAT roll versus the strangler's strength to remain conscious. If the roll fails, the victim is automatically Stunned for 1d10 rounds. The strangler also inflicts his normal Strength damage per round. Body Armor of a higher rank than the attacker's Strength renders this attack harmless, although the Grappling result still applies.

Fire damage: Flame damage, magical or otherwise, is rolled on the "Energy" column. This is never made clear in the rules.

Magic & Miscellany

Magical attacks: Page 64 of the **Player's Book** notes that magical spells (bolts and beams) that reduce the target's Health are rolled on the Force column to determine any additional effects. This is not a rule change on my part, I'm merely pointing this out, as it is buried at the bottom of a paragraph. So, despite the fact that spells use magical "energy," you should roll most spells on the Force column.

On the topic of magic, I must mention MHAC9 *Realms of Magic* accessory. If you have a lot of magic and magic-wielders in your campaign, this supplement is invaluable. Unfortunately, it has been out of print for a few years. You still may be able to find it on the back shelf of your game store, and TSR's Mail Order Hobby Shop has a limited number of them for sale.

Some name changes must be made on that supplement's Universal Chart columns as this was published prior to the MARVEL SUPER HEROES Advanced Set. The "Slugfest" column in MHAC9 becomes the "Blunt Attacks" column in the Advanced Set. Similarly, the "Bite-Claw" column becomes "Edged Attacks," "Targeting" becomes "Shooting," and "Blasting" becomes "Force." The Psyche columns can be used as is, and the "Stun" and "Slam" columns should be replaced with the column of the same names from the Advanced Set.

Karma awards: I've never felt it was fair to heroes to use the Karma point division method in the *Player's Book* on page 34. If one hero rescues a dozen people from a burning building, that hero gets 100 Karma points (see the Karma Summary Listing on page 37). But, if two heroes rescue those same 12 people, each hero only gets 50 Karma points. In my campaign, I determine the Karma point awards, and any penalties, for each hero's actions and award that total to each hero present without dividing the Karma point award.

That leads to heroes having more Karma points to spend on advancement, but it also allows for a more *heroic* campaign. If a hero knows he'll only get 40-50 Karma points for an adventure (and believe me, most players do keep track), he is going to be less willing to spend Karma points on heroic feats and maneuvers. He will, therefore, fail FEAT rolls more often. However, if a hero knows he is going to collect 100-150 Karma points, he will be willing to spend more of it during the game in heroic actions.

If you have players who love to horde Karma points and channel it all into advancement, demonstrate the usefulness of spending Karma points in battle. Present a villain with a lot of Karma points who spends them in battle. Once the player realizes why his hero is getting the tar beaten out of him, he should wise up.

Also, be sure to keep track of a villain's Karma points. If in the course of an encounter the heroes lose Karma points, the villain(s) should gain Karma points. Similarly, as heroes can gain Karma points for things they do "off-screen" (civilian identities, weekly awards, etc.), the villains should, too. If a villain goes on a bank-robbing spree and the heroes finally catch him in the act of robbing his fourth bank, then the villain should have received Karma points for robbing the first three banks and getting away with it. This provides a great motivation for heroes to track down villains on a crime-spree—the heroes don't want the villains to get any more Karma points that can be used in battle and for advancement.

Odds And Ends

Many super hero role-playing games have been published over the years; some are fun and playable, others are neither. Here is a list of topics the MARVEL SUPER HEROES game doesn't cover in detail, but other super hero RPGs handle:

Campaign Design: Like Mayfair's DC HEROES game, the MARVEL SUPER HEROES system expects you to play in some version of the published comics' universe, and you certainly can do that and have an enjoyable campaign. What the books don't discuss is how to set up *your own* version of that universe. I.C.E./Hero Games' CHAMPIONS game has an extensive campaign set-up section in its 4th Edition hardcover rules. The "Campaign Sourcebook" section discusses the tone and outlook of a campaign, the morality and realism levels of a campaign, and has a terrific section on how to *ruin* a good campaign. Fantasy Games Unlimited's VILLAINS & VIGILANTES (V&V) game also has a brief section on setting campaigns in alternate realities, the past, or the future.

Another engaging aspect in the design of the V&V game is the "You are there" principle. In this game, you don't create a character that has super powers; you quantify *your own* strength, dexterity, etc., into game terms, and then generate super powers for "yourself." You truly become a "hero."

Campaign laws: Again, both the CHAMPIONS and V&V games have sections on the law and law enforcement in worlds with super heroes. The V&V game also has an exhaustive listing of misdemeanor and felony crimes and the punishments that perpetrators of these crimes can expect.

Campaign Worlds: One benefit of the MARVEL SUPER HEROES system is that it comes with an established universe. However, outside those of the comics, very few other published super hero settings exist. One exception is the setting in Gamescience's SUPERHERO 2044 game. This game, published in 1978, is virtually unplayable, but the rule book includes the island nation of Inguria, set in the year 2044. If you can find a copy of the game, check out Inguria.

TSR has published the F.R.E.E.LANCERS and F.R.E.E.AMERICA supplements for the TOP SECRET/S.I.™ game. These detail a dark future for America where science has advanced to the point that beings who resemble "super heroes" exist. In a way, it is a mixture of cyberpunk and super heroes—it's a very interesting combination. If this intrigues you, you may still be able to find copies in stores.

Campaign Motivations: One of the DC HEROES game's best features is the section on character motivations. These motives often deal with the character's origin, and explain why the hero is out laying his life on the line for others. A game with an alignment system somewhat similar to that of the AD&D® game is Palladium Book's HEROES UNLIMITED game. These well-defined concepts and codes of behavior are very

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Naming Military Units

Giving Colorful Titles To Groups Of Soldiers

by Gregory W. Detwiler

Nearly every role playing campaign has at least the potential for military action on a large scale. This means the GM will have to conjure up names for military units. Merely designating 1st Infantry, 2nd Armored, etc., is not very interesting—although it can quicken the paperwork.

Real life is full of units with classy names—The Black Watch, The Coldstream Guards, The Rainbow Division, The Green Berets, The King's Companions, The Ironsides, or the umteenhundredth Legion Victoria Vitrix. All of them have glamorous histories. Many RPG systems also have fancy combat unit names. FASA has done well, especially with regard to their *Battletech* game: Wolf's Dragoons, the New Syrtis Fusliers, Waco Rangers, McCarron's Armored Cavalry, Kell Hounds, Smithson's Chinese Bandits, Hansen's Roughriders—the list goes on.

To a lesser extent, many other game systems also have great unit names. Even West End Games' *Paranoia* has the dreaded Vulture Squadrons. Military units with glamorous names help make identification and role-playing easier for PCs who enlist in them, particularly if an area's history is sufficiently detailed to permit a complete listing of the unit's battle honors. Adventure planning can be made easier if the unit has a traditional enemy, as in the case of the Waco Rangers and Wolf's Dragoons.

The Basics

To begin, determine how many units you need to give the same general name, whether Marine divisions or Deneb Light Calvary. Adding numbers to unit names is all right as long as a number is not the only designation. Affix a unit marker if there is more than one type of weapons system in the army in question: infantry, armor, artillery, spearmen, musketeers—it all depends on the time period and army organization. In many cases, a military unit has been raised mostly or solely in one particular region. Other units could associate themselves with a particular region after being stationed there for a long period of time—as was the case with many Roman legions. However, that was a practice that backfired on more than one occasion when the legions grew more attached to the region than to Rome, and they refused to pull out to reinforce another sector. So, don't forget the basics: number (assuming the unit is not unique), unit type, and—optionally—area of origin.

Fancy Names

Now you need to add fancy or fierce-sounding names such as marauders, crusaders, etc. These are usually designed to make the unit sound tough, possibly tougher than it really is. This last would often be the case in many Third World armies. A leader might also have his name inserted into the unit; he could be the outfit's founder or current commander. If naming a unit for its commander becomes a common practice, however, it could give the bookkeepers a headache trying to keep up with a name change every time the unit gets a new commander. Other options include naming units after famed leaders of the past or heads of state or mercenary patrons. In the latter category, the ruler need not be mentioned by personal name, providing a title such as The Emperor's Own.

You can have a lot of fun making up unit names. This applies not only to the GM, but also to PCs who found mercenary units or raise their own private armies or feudal levies. Inevitably, some will favor titles with words that have similar sounds, such as the Raging Red Rhinos of Rawalpindi. This would be my personal choice for a unit of assault Mechs in *Battletech*. Be prepared for fights between units of the same side, though. If a name is popular enough, your traveling MechWarriors may encounter more than one *additional* Raging Red Rhinos of Rawalpindi. At the very least, it could result in a legal battle to see who has the right to the title. This could be handled by legal adjudication, possibly by ComStar in *Battletech,* or by a no-holds-barred battle, with the title going to the survivors. And if more than one unit of the same name exists, don't ignore the opportunity for cases of mistaken identity where the PCs' unit gets blamed for the misdeeds of others—or takes credits for their victories.

Unless you are engaged in a humorous campaign, your employment-hunting PC mercenary unit should not have a name like Bozo's Bunglers.

Sources For Exotic Names

The major source for fancier titles is the oft-mentioned mists of antiquity. Greek and Roman names are common for units with a taste for the exotic. Phalanx, legion, triarii, gladiators, pezetaeri (this one is Macedonian), etc. All are good choices, particularly for ancient campaign worlds or for modernized anachronisms such as the *Renegade Legion* game by FASA. Other options include: Arab and Turkish names—Ialayars, Jannissaries, Dervishes, Madcaps, Spahis, or Sipahis; Italian—Bersaglieri, Granatieri, Carbinieri, Alpini; Mongol—tuman, Ordo; Zulu—Impi; and Venetian—Stradiots.

The next best source of real names is from the Renaissance period through the Napoleonic wars. Fusileers, grenadiers, hussars, dragoons, cuirassiers, and Zouaves came from this time.

Often, the mere translation of a word to a foreign equivalent is enough to give a military unit a touch of glamour. A classic example from World War II is the German "panzer," which essentially means "armor" and is used for tank and mechanized units. You can use straight translations, such as helepolii, which is ancient Greek for "city-takers," or develop variations. For example, the German antitank troops were referred to as Jagers, from the German word for "hunter." In earlier centuries, this was a name for scouts, irregular units, skirmishers and more.

The names of animals and monsters present further possibilities. Lions, tigers, dragons, and gorgons are favorites. Use foreign language translations to add style. Unless the player characters are very well-traveled or live in a world or universe of widespread knowledge, animal and monster names should be restricted to appropriate geographic areas. The Raging Red Rhinos of Rawalpindi, for example, would not be appro-

priate for a European unit in any time period after the wooly rhino became extinct.

Colorful Add-Ons

Now consider using words that are not adequate names in themselves, but could add color to a unit when combined with other words. Appropriately enough, colors are a major source of adding flavor. Red is often used, since it is the color of blood. Black implies power, stealth, or mystery. Blue would be appropriate for naval and air units—and symbolizes loyalty (true blue). Gray is another power color, especially for units that have been around awhile, since it symbolizes age. In many cultures, yellow would be a poor choice, as it suggests cowardice, and green might imply envy. Green, however, could also conjure images of forests and other wild areas. White can be a symbol of purity, ideal for crusaders and other holy warriors. Although, white might suggest softness and weakness.

Purple is handicapped by being slightly silly-sounding. However, in Western lore it is traditionally the imperial color, because the Caesars of Rome wore it. Pink suggests weakness; and rose and violet have the additional handicap of being associated with delicate flowers. Orange and brown are neutral.

Sample Names

Here is a smattering of names you might want to choose for your military units, embellishing on them as your imagination allows.

A Aces, Afghans, Afridis, Airborne, Airmobile, Alpini, Amalekites, Amazons, Arbalesters, Archers, Argives, Argonauts, Armor, Arquebusiers, Artillery, Assassins, Attackers, Avatars, Axmen.

B Badgers, Badmen, Bahairiz, Band, Bandits, Bane, Barbarians, Barracudas, Battlers, Bears, Bedouins, Behemoths, Berbers, Berets, Bersaglieri, Berserkers, Bestiarii, Bobcats, Bombardiers, Bombers, Boxers, Buccaneers, Bushi, Bushmen, Bush Rangers.

C Ceasar's Own, Cannoneers, Carabinieri, Cataphracts, Cats, Cavaliers, Cavalry, Centurions, Champions, Charioteers, Choppers, Cobras, Cohorts, Colonials, Commandos, Companions, Company, Condors, Condottiere, Copperheads, Corsairs, Cossacks, Cottonmouths, Cougars, Count's Own, Cowboys, Cowpokes, Crusaders, Crushers, Cuirassiers, Cutlasses.

D Daggers, Dark, Death-Dealers, Death's Head, Defenders, Dervishes, Diadochi, Diamachares, Dinosaurs, Dirks, Doom, Dragonnes, Dragons, Dragonslayers, Dragoons, Drakes, Drakki, Drakkons, Druids, Duelists, Duke's Own.

E Eagles, Elementals, Elephants, Enemies, Enforcers, Engineers, Equites, Executioners, Exterminators.

F Falcons, Federals, Federati, Fencers, Fighters, Filibusters, Flamers, Foresters, Foxes, Freebooters, Freemen, Furies, Fusileers, Fyrdsmen.

G Gamblers, Gang, Gangsters, Gendarmes, Genitours, Ghosts, Giants, Gladiators, Goliaths, Gorgons, Gorillas, Goths, Granatieri, Grenadiers, Griffins, Grizzlies, Guards, Guardsmen, Guerrillas, Gunmen, Gunners, Gunslingers.

H Halberdiers, Hammerheads, Hammers, Hastati, Hatchetmen, Hawks, Heavy (unit type), Headhunters, Helepolii, Heroes (or Heroines), Highlanders, High-Rollers, Highwaymen, Hippocampi, Hippos, Hobilars, Hoplites, Hoplomaches, Hordes, Hornets, Horse, Horsemen, Hospitallers, Hounds, Housecarls, House Troops, Huns, Hunters, Huscarls, Husars, Hussars, Hypaspists.

I Ialayars, Immortals, Imperial Guard, Imperialists, Imperials, Impi, Indians, Infantry, Interceptors, Invincibles, Ironclads, Iron Guards, Iron Men, Ironsides.

J Jagers, Jaguars, Janissaries, Jayhawkers, Jousters.

K Katanas, Kavelleri, Kerns, Killers, Kingmakers, King's Own, Knights, Kondors, Krakens, Krushers, Kshariyas.

L Lancers, Landsknechts, Legion, Legionnaires, Legionaries, Leopards, Leviathans, Liberators, Light (unit type), Lions, Lizards, Lowlifes, Lynxes.

M Madcaps, Mad Dogs, Madmen, Magyars, Mahouts, Mamelukes, Mammoths, Maniple, March Militia, Marksmen, Marines, Mashers, Mastodons, Maulers, Medium (unit type), Memluks, Men-at-Arms, Men-O-War, Mercenaries, Mercs, Militia, Militiamen, Minions, Minutemen, Mirmillones, Moghuls, Mongols, Moors, Mountaineers, Mounted Rifles, Mountain Men, Monsters, Musketeers, Myrmidons,

N Nagas, _____ of the Night, Nightmares, Night Stalkers, Ninjas, Nomads.

O Ogres, Orcas, Ordu, Ospreys, Ostrogoths, Ottomans.

P Pachyderms, Paladins, Panthers, Panzers, Paramilitary, Paratroopers, Paratroops, Pathans, Peltasts, Pezeaeri, Phalanx, Phantoms, Pikemen, Piranhas, Pirates, Pistoleers, Praetorian Guard, Praetorians, Prince's Own, Principes, Privateers, Psiloi, Pumas, Punks, Pythons.

Q Queenmakers, Queen's Own, Quickdraws, Quick-Killers.

R Raiders, Range Riders, Rangers, Rapiers, Rattlers, Ravens, Raveners, Red Indians, Reiters, Retiarii, Rhinos, Riders, Riflemen, Ronin, Roughnecks, Rough-Riders, Ruffians, Ryuken.

S Sabres, Sabretooths, Samnites, Samurai, Sappers, Saracens, Scalpers, Scimitars, Scouts, Scutati, Sea Lions, Seals, Security, Secutors, Sentinels, Sharks, Shikaries, Shrikes, Sidewinders, Sipahis, Slammers, Slashers, Slayers, Slicers, Smashers, Smilodons, Smiters, Stabbers, Stalkers, Stationarii, Stilettos, Stingrays, Storm, Stormers, Stromtroopers, Stradiots, Strikers, Sturmers, Sturmetruppen, Survivalists, Swashbucklers, Sword of _____, Sworders, Swordsmen.

T Tankers, Tartars, Tatars, Templars, Teutons, Thraceans, Thugees, Thugs, Thunder, Thunderbirds, Thunderbolts, Thunderers, Thundering Herd, Tigers, Timariots, Titans, Triarii, Tridents, Tuaregs, Tulwars, Tuman, Turcopoles, Turkomans, Turks.

U Undefeated, Unicorns.

V Valkyries, Vampires, Vandals, Vanguard, Velites, Victors, Vigilantes, Vikings, Vindicators, Visigoths, Vultures.

W Wakazashis, Wako, Warlocks, Warriors, Wasps, Werewolves, Widow-Makers, Wildcats, Wild Men, Wolf Pack, Wolverines, Wolvers, Wolves, Wraiths, Wranglers, Wyverns.

X Xenophobes, Xenos.

Y Yataghans, Yeomen, Youngbloods, Young Turks.

Z Zealots, Zouaves, Zulus.

❑

Into The Dark

Captive Brides of the Barbarian King

by James Lowder

Ah, the perils of reviewing bad films.

The column is short this month because of a video I raked over the coals last time. (No, the director didn't firebomb my apartment.) As I was watching the dreadful *Hard Rock Zombies*, I heard a tiny voice screaming in my apartment. I thought it was my conscience rebuking me for wasting time on such trash. Little did I suspect it was a desperate cry for help from my VCR. Three weeks and a sizeable repair bill later, the machine is better, and I've vowed to watch at least one good movie for each column. Honest.

This issue begins a two-part survey of some of the highs and lows of fantasy film, with emphasis on Sword & Sorcery. The meaning of the column's subtitle for this issue will become clear as we move along.

You can't get any better	*****
Entertaining and enjoyable	****
There are worse films	***
Wait for cable	**
A waste of good tape	*

THE PRINCESS BRIDE

1987, 98 Minutes
20th Century Fox
Director: Rob Reiner
Cast: Cary Elwes, Robin Wright, Mandy Patinkin, Chris Sarandon
*****

The Princess Bride is, by far, the best fantasy film to be produced in years.

A doting grandfather intrudes upon his sick grandson's video game playing and offers him a priceless gift—a book that has been read to the children in the family for generations. At first the boy is reluctant, since the love story involves kissing, but he is quickly caught up in the tale. You will be, too.

The story is deceptively simple. A pair of lovers are separated, and the young man (named Westley) must overcome many daunting obstacles to save his lady love (named Buttercup). She is the prisoner of an evil prince, who intends to make her marry him. Giants, master swordsmen, shrieking eels, a dread pirate named Roberts, and a miracle or two liven up the tale, but it is the deft handling of the characters by everyone involved that makes the movie so special.

The cast is superb. Cary Elwes is classically dashing as Westley, and Robin Wright (in her screen debut) is slyly appealing as the strong-willed but innocent Princess Buttercup. Mandy Patinkin and Andre the Giant give great performances as unlikely heroes, as do Chris Sarandon and Christopher Guest as the villainous Prince Humperdink and his six-fingered henchman, Count Rugen.

Director Rob Reiner and screenwriter William Goldman (who adapted his own book for the film) create a story that lends itself to such strong characters. The background world—from the Cliffs of Insanity to the Fire Swamp—is full of wondrous creatures and spectacular dangers, but that never overshadows the heroes and villains.

FIRE AND ICE

1982, 81 Minutes
PSO
Director: Ralph Bakshi
Cast: Animated
***

When Princess Teegra is kidnapped by the subhuman servants of the evil Nekron, it's up to young Larn to rescue her and foil the Ice Lord's plan for world domination.

Do you see a pattern developing here?

Fire and Ice is the result of a collaboration between animation master Ralph Bakshi and fantasy illustrator Frank Frazetta. The animated story, which tells of the clash between Ice Lord Nekron and the good people of Fire Keep, is entertaining, but veteran comic book writers Roy Thomas and Gerry Conway filled the screenplay with most of the standard Sword & Sorcery cliches. The men in this world are either heroic or barbaric, the women voluptuous, seductive, and full of guile. Monsters lurk in every darkened corner, but the creatures are never strong enough or smart enough to harm the hero.

The animation, like much of Bakshi's work, is heavily rotoscoped (a process in which the animators trace footage of live actors and create the animation cells from those drawings). Rotoscoping can produce outstanding animation, like the old Fleisher Superman cartoons, or it can produce awkward films, like Bakshi's earlier failure, *The Lord of the Rings.*

Fire and Ice isn't a bad way to kill 80 minutes, but afterward you'll almost certainly be left with the odd feeling that you've seen the movie before.

THE BARBARIANS

1987, 88 Minutes
Cannon
Director: Ruggero Deodata
Cast: Peter Paul, David Paul
**

When the queen of the Ragniks is taken prisoner by evil King Kadar, it's up to Gore and Kutchek (otherwise known as the Barbarian Brothers) to rescue her and foil the king's plans for world domination. Wait, did I review this already this month?

I told you the subtitle would become clear with time.

For the past six months Jean and Skip have been telling me I should review *The Barbarians.* Yet when they said I should watch the film, their faces held a forced innocence, a look usually adopted only by sadistic older brothers when telling their siblings that baking chocolate is indeed good to eat. (Skip is much better at this than Jean.) Naturally I was suspicious.

To my surprise, however, I found *The Barbarians* pretty entertaining. This is due almost entirely to the fact that the Paul Brothers have a ball as the dumb-as-concrete heroes of this standard quest flick. The special effects are cheesy, the background music mind-numbingly bad, and the acting either overwrought or wooden. Despite this, I did not find myself tearing out my hair as I had suspected I might.

Continued on page 30

Chemcheaux

The Magic Shoppe for the Discriminate

by Dale "Slade" Henson

Jett was tired. His bones ached, and the stitches across his abdomen made him painfully aware of every step he took. Ahead of him in the dusk was a building. Like an old friend, it stood waiting. Light from the barred windows threw striped patterns onto the street ahead of him, and a continual light *sign above the entrance proclaimed: Chemcheaux 452.*

Jett padded to the door, which slid open to his touch as he entered. The all-too-familiar nausea coursed through his body as he passed through the door frame, but the sensation left as soon as he was inside the shop. Indoors, familiar sounds and smells greeted him. Chairs surrounding circular tables filled the room; in the corner, a group of bent, aging mages and priests sat about recounting tales of heroic deeds. A smile played across Jett's thin lips as he listened to the cronies for a moment. He remembered when he used to be impressed by the clientele this shop attracted.

The smell of exotic teas struck him, and a thirst built up in the pit of his stomach. Pouring himself a mug from the steaming cauldron nearby, he settled himself down into a chair across from the gossiping mages. Within a few minutes, a thin rail of a man shuffled toward him.

"Hello, Jett. What can I do for you today?"

"My regards, Prismal." Jett said evenly, tapping his fingers slowly. "I am surprised to see you here. I thought you devoted all your time to the Electropolis branch."

"Well," Prismal replied, "I heard Gamalon was in town from the Rock of Bral, so I came to visit him. He can spin a yarn like no other. What brings you here?" The overly-thin man eyed Jett with caution. Jett's exploits were all-too-well known and somewhat tainted, and Prismal was wary.

"I've just returned from an 'expedition,' and I have some magical items to sell or trade," Jett whispered, not wanting to draw the attention of the other mages nearby.

"Well, you've come to the right place." Prismal stood and escorted Jett to the counter.

Chemcheaux (pronounced KEM-show), operated by Prismal, is a magic shop like none other. Having franchises in thousands of cities on hundreds of worlds, these shops prove to be invaluable to the adventurer and to the common man. Each one is owned by a single individual or company, but all belong to the vast network. For more than 100 years, Chemcheaux has provided people with the rare and wonderful, the cursed and the bland.

Each Chemcheaux shop specializes in one single item. Chemcheaux 452 in Calimport, Toril, creates *potions of clairaudience,* while branch 223 in Ravens Bluff makes *swords +2*. In the back room of each shop, a teleporter allows the shop owner to enter any back room of any other Chemcheaux. Often a shop owner must visit another store to procure items for his customers.

The profits are teleported to Chemcheaux 1 in Electropolis, Pangaea, where they are distributed equally to all shop owners. These individuals take care of salaries, land rentals, taxes, etc.

Chemcheaux 223, Ravens Bluff

Refer to the map. The numbers refer to various areas within the Chemcheax building. Most Chemcheax shops have the same layout.

1: This is the front door to Chemcheaux. The door has a *Prismal's reversal* spell cast upon it. This enchantment is explained in the New Spells section at the end of this article.

2: These are thick windows. They are rumored to be unbreakable, and they are magicked to prevent *teleport* and *gate* spells from functioning within the building—except for the *Chemcheax teleport pad* in the back room.

3: This is the main meeting hall. Here, old mages and priests congregate to brag of their exploits, to learn about recently created magical items and spells, and to share their own arcane findings.

4: These cauldrons, basically for the mages and priests, hold hot exotic teas. Next to the teas, the Chemcheaux owners place donuts and other pastries. While the teas are available throughout the day, the pastries are usually gone by mid morning.

5: This is a chest-high counter. All sales, exchanges and refunds are made here.

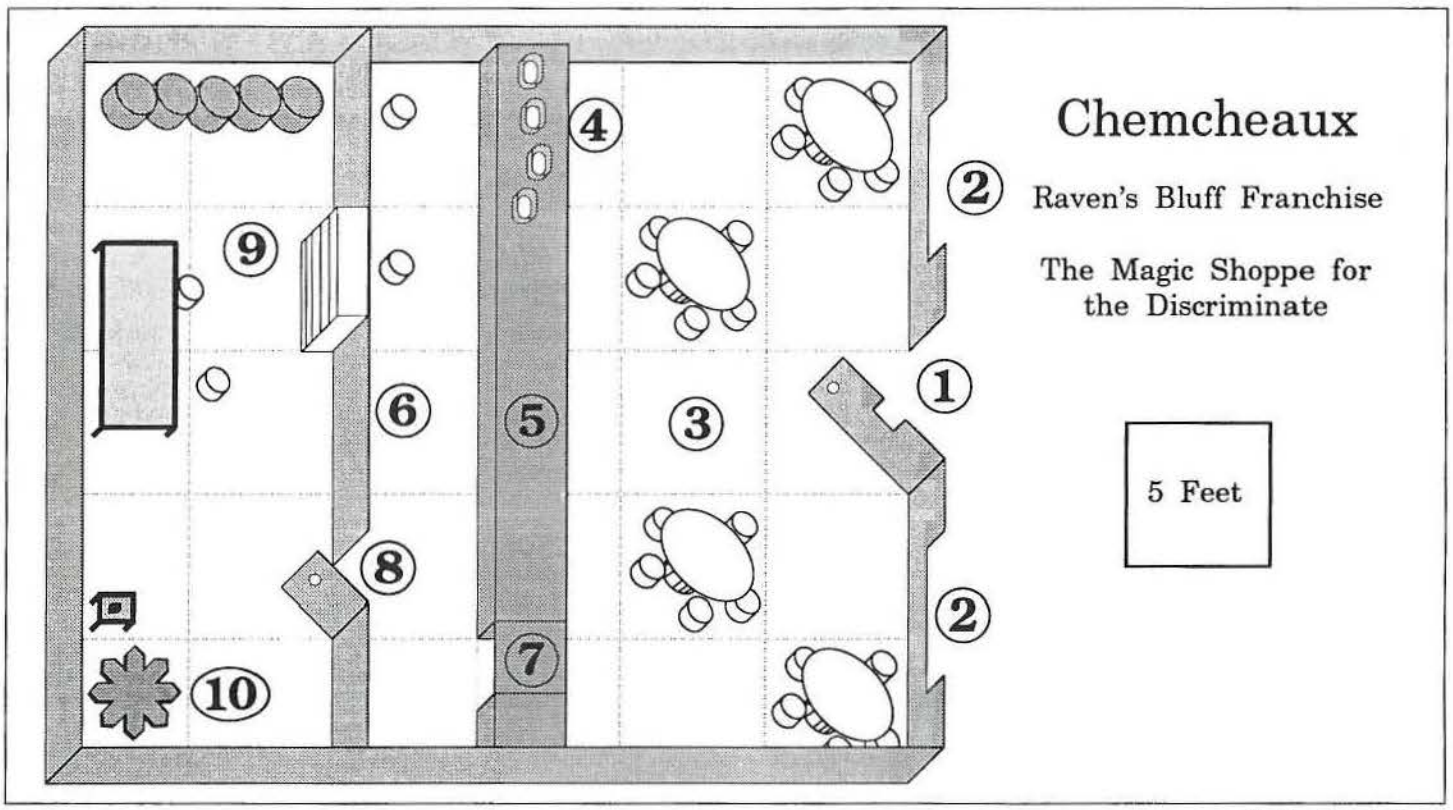
6: This is the wall separating the back room from the meeting hall. The wall is made of a large, thick enchanted mirror. The *mirror* is AC 8 can withstand 100 points of damage before shattering. Further, it regenerates 10 hit points per round. If the mirror is broken, 1d4+3 mages of level 12 or higher who were sitting behind the wall attack the offender with rods, staffs, wands, and spells—until the offender is driven off or killed. Thereafter, the Chemcheaux is temporarily closed until a replacement mirror can be teleported from Chemcheaux 1, and installed. This, and an investigation of the incident by Prismal, usually takes 1d4 days.

7: This secret door allows access to a hidden section of the shop, where Prismal's employees sit and watch the customers. If anyone besides the proprietor or Prismal opens these doors, a *magic mouth* screams a warning.

8: This door opens to the room containing the *Chemcheax teleport pad.* If anyone other than the proprietor or Prismal opens this door, a magic mouth screams a warning, and a glyph of warding reduces the entrant by two levels, although a saving throw versus spell at −4 negates the effect.

9: This is the back room. The equipment furnishings depend upon the items constructed at each particular shop. For example, a plethora of *swords +2* are stored at the Ravens Bluff shop.

10: This is the *Chemcheax teleport pad.* See the New Magic Item section at the end of this article for more information. Next to the teleport pad is a massive book resting on a small table. This book details the locations and numbers of each Chemcheaux and the items each specializes in. The book has three sections. The first section has the Chemcheauxs in numeric order. The second section lists the Chemcheauxs alphabetically by world and city. The third and most important list, details the Chemcheauxs in alphabetical order by the item it creates. By standing on the teleport pad and saying the Chemcheaux number, the mage can instantly



Map by Brian J. Blume

teleport to that location to pick up the desired item.

The Political Intrigue

Chemcheaux 223 is an oddity among Chemcheaux's. Chemcheaux can afford to sell items for the prices listed in the Chemcheaux Product Catalogue, this being at a significant discount over what what the majority of other magic sellers charge.

Because of that, the disgruntled Mage's Guild and enraged Guild of Magic Shop Owners, who feared they would be put out of business, demanded the government pass a law inhibiting Chemcheaux's threat. The shop owners know they cannot compete with Chemcheaux's prices, and since their livelihood depends upon the sale of magic, they demanded Chemcheaux be limited—if not kicked out of the city.

The Ravens Bluff officials wanted to keep the Mage's Guild and magic shop owners happy, yet they did not want to force Chemcheaux out of the Living City. The officials see Chemcheaux as a way for themselves to acquire certain magical items. Therefore, they created a law that allowed Chemcheaux to place a shop in Ravens Bluff, but only the retailers of magical items (ie, magic shop owners) could buy from them. This assures Chemcheax's continuance as a place of business.

This new law states the following:

Wholesalers of Magical Items

Article I

1. All Wholesalers of magical items must serve a Brokerage function when selling or attempting to sell within the Areas of Ravens Bluff.

2. Wholesalers who do not serve within this law are subject to the penalties laid out forthwith in Article II, Section 1.

Article II

1. Any such actions taken by said Wholesaler that is not construed as brokerage in origin must sell all assets at one-half price to those retailers served by the brokerage for a period of no shorter than seven (7) years, or close said brokerage for a period no shorter than ten (10) years, and no longer than twenty (20), hereon called the Sales Quarantine. A fine of 50,000 gp must be paid at time of conviction.

2. Should said brokerage defy the Sales Quarantine, a fine of no less than 500,000 gp must be paid, the owner cast into hard labor for a period of not more than fifteen (15) years, the shop dismantled, and all said assets seized and sold at auction set upon only by retailers within the Ravens Bluff Areas.

Article III

1. Wholesaler is hereby stated as an individual, company, institution, corporation, partnership, or group of individuals of any race or creed that sells magically enhanced or diminished items of any and all types, be it weapon, or non-weapon, be it clothing, or non-clothing, be it protection or non-protection, at a price equal to or below a pricing structure as transcribed forthwith by Article VII, Sections 1 and 2, and delineated forthwith by Article VIII.

Article IV

1. Brokerage is hereby stated as an individual, company, institution, corporation, partnership, or group of individuals of any race or creed that only sells magical items to other individuals, companies, institutions, corporations,

partnerships, or groups of individuals of any race or creed that do not sell items at costs delineated forthwith in Article VII, heretofore mentioned as retailers.

2. In this function as a brokerage, the Wholesaler guarantees the continuation of retailers in the Ravens Bluff Areas, assuring jobs, money, and economic growth for hundreds of Ravens Bluff people whose welfare demands the continuation of their personal or their relations' employment.

3. The Wholesaler who is found responsible for the loss of any jobs due to economic intervention of any kind, whether by direct sales to the general public, or any other reason deemed illegal or uncooperative by a Ravens Bluff court of law, must pay:

(A) Damages equal to seven (7) years salary including the taxes of such wages to be paid in full upon demand of the injured individual or individuals.

(B) Restitution to the owner of the bankrupted retailer equal to seven (7) years profit based upon past sales notwithstanding the year previous to the loss of business, or the best three years' profit within a fifteen (15) year time period, whichever is higher, to be paid in full upon demand of the injured company, including taxes on said monies.

(C) Reimbursement to the government of Ravens Bluff in the form of fines equal to one-half total monies paid in parts A and B of Section 3 in Article IV for the compensation of lost taxes on the monies lost in the bankrupt actions against the retailer and the unemployed individual or individuals, to be paid in full immediately, or within ten (10) days if notification of payment inability is made to the tax collector within twenty-four (24) hours of conviction.

During such time as conflict with this article exists, the wholesaler is quarantined to the Ravens Bluff city limits until at such time parts A, B, and C of Section 3 in Article IV are met with satisfaction.

4. If the terms of the aforementioned Article IV are not met within a prescribed amount of time, or if the wholesaler does not meet the demands set by the notification of payment inability, the wholesaler is subject to the terms laid out by Article II, Section 2, as well as the payment demands laid out by the aforementioned Article IV, Section 3, Parts A, B, and C, as well as any other applicable Ravens Bluff law now made or not yet made as of the date of this law amendment.

Article V

1. The General Public is herein noted as being individuals, companies, institutions, corporations, partnerships, or groups of individuals of any race or creed that do not sell magical items to other individuals, companies, institutions, corporations, partnerships, or groups of individuals of any race or creed for continued monetary profit heretoforementioned as a retailer.

2. Those of the General Public also includes the occasional adventuring individuals who sell their magical profits from excavations, adventures, and quests.

3. Those of the General Public who sell more than twelve (12) items in any consecutive twelve (12) month period at or below the price structure set up forthwith in Article VII, Section 1 and 2, are hereby noted as being a Wholesaler, and must abide by the articles set in this law.

Article VI

1. The Ravens Bluff Areas, or otherwise called the Areas of Ravens Bluff, includes the areas within the city limits of Ravens Bluff and the area surrounding the City of Ravens Bluff.

2. This surrounding area's northern limit is the Fire River, limited to the south and east by a radius of fifty (50) miles, and limited to the west by the Dragon's Reach Bay.

Article VII

1. Retailer is herein noted as being an individual, company, institution, corporation, partnership, or group of individuals of any race or creed that do not sell:

(A) More than 5% of their total gross income of magical items, or

(B) More than 5% of their total numeric sales to other individuals, companies, institutions, corporations, partnerships, or groups of individuals of any race or creed for less than or equal to the pricing guidelines set up forthwith and heretofore in Article VIII, Sections 1 and 2.

2. Retailers must be duly licensed as a retailer, and carry the license at the time of purchase when procuring items from registered wholesalers. This license must be shown at time of sale.

A. The retailer's license must be surrendered upon demand of the guilds mentioned forthwith in Article VIII, Section 1, or by the Lord Mayor of Ravens Bluff.

B. The retailer's license only can be purchased from the aforementioned guilds in Article VIII, Section 1, or from the Lord Mayor's council of businesses.

Article VIII

1. The Mage's Guild of Ravens Bluff and/or the Guild of Magic Shop Owners of Ravens Bluff, in conjunction or as separate entities, are solely responsible for the limit on magic item prices within the Areas of Ravens Bluff.

2. If the two guilds do not work in amalgamation, the higher of the two prices for a single item shall be used to determine the limit prescribed for determining if an institution is to be considered a Wholesaler.

3. These price guides can be reversed by the Lord Mayor of Ravens Bluff if he or she notifies the two guilds heretoforementioned in Section 1 of Article VIII in writing fifteen (15) days before they become law.

Article IX

1. Should an individual, company, institution, corporation, partnership, or group of individuals of any race or creed sell 5% or more of its items at or below the price set in the aforementioned Article VIII, Sections 1 and 2, it is hereby deemed a Wholesaler, and hereon confined to the terms laid out in this law.

Article X

1. A Wholesaler cannot sell magical items to the General Public as delineated in the heretoforementioned Article V, Sections 1, 2, and 3.

2. If found guilty of such actions, the individual, company, institution, corporation, partnership, or group of individuals of any race or creed deemed a Wholesaler is confined to the penalties laid out in the aforementioned Article II, Section 1, or in Article II, Section 2 for repetitive offense.

Article XI

1. Chemcheaux, hereby noted as being owned and operated by Prismal the Outrageous, and managed by Rhodhan and/or Mortimer, is considered a Wholesaler and must observe all articles of this law herein.

The Translation

The law above states that anyone selling more than 12 magical items in a 12-month period must become a licensed wholesaler, selling his, her or its items only to retailers. If wholesalers are

caught selling underpriced items to individuals rather than magic shops, the wholesalers are subject to the penalties stated in Section II.

Prismal The Outrageous

Male Human Wizard/Priest/Monk 35th/35th/14th

STR: 14
INT: 20
WIS: 21
DEX: 13
CON: 18
CHR: 16
AC Normal: 1
AC Rear: 1
THAC0: −2
Hit Points: 96
Alignment: Lawful Neutral
Languages: Common, Centaur, Gold Dragon, Silver Dragon, Dryad, Dwarvish, Elvish, Minotaur, Satyr, Sylph.

Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, dart, sling, staff
NonWeapon Proficiencies: Ancient history (20), brewing (20), direction sense (22), etiquette (16), gem cutting (12), healing (20), herbalism (19), languages-ancient (20), reading/writing (21), religion (21), spellcraft (18), heraldry (20), pottery (11), weather sense (20)
Special Abilities: Immune to 1st and 2nd level illusion spells, immune to *cause fear, charm person, command, friends, hypnotism, forget, hold person, ray of enfeeblement, scare,* and *fear.*
Magic Items: *Ring of protection +5, cloak of protection +4, ceremonial sword* (granting +1 to all saving throws, *staff of the magi,* and practically anything else he wants to procure from one of his shops.
Wizard spells/day: 9 9 9 9 8 8 8 8
Priest spells/day: 13 13 13 12 11 9 9

Wizard Spell Books

Level One

Alarm
Burning Hands
*Catapult**
Charm Person
Detect Magic
Enlarge
Friends
*Hair****
Identify
*Magic Fist****
*Scatterspray**
Unseen Servant
Armor
Cantrip
Change Self
*Corpslight**
*Diary****
Feather Fall
Grease
Hold Portal
*Know School**
Magic Missile
*Snilloc's Heat Seeking Missile****
Wizard Mark

Level Two

*Agannazar's Scorcher**
*Bladethirst**
Continual Light
*Decastave**
*Due North****
*Flying Fist**
Invisibility
Know Alignment
*Smoke Shape***
*Vocalize**
Wizard Lock
Bind
Blindness
Deafness
Detect Invisibility
ESP
*Ice Knife***
Knock
Levitate
*Smoke Form***
Web

Level Three

*Blacklight**
Clairvoyance
Dispel Magic
*Distant Diary****
Fireball
*Icelance**
*Mummy Touch**
*Prismal's Savings Account****
*Steam Breath***
Blink
*Dire Charm**
*Dispel Silence**
Feign Death
Haste
Lightning Bolt
*Photodraft****
Slow

Level Four

Charm Monster
*Detect Psionics****
*Encrypt**
*Fire Gate**
Ice Storm
Massmorph
*Prismal's Handy Mirror****
*Spectral Wings**
*Transfix***
*Cook****
Dig
*Find Person****
Fumble
Magic Mirror
*Missile Mastery**
Shout
*Thunderlance**
Vacancy

Level Five

Airy Water
Chaos
Conjure Elemental
Domination
*Improved Skull Watch**
*Ironguard**
*Shock Shield****
*Spiritself***
Telekinesis
Avoidance
Cone of Cold
Dismissal
Fabricate
*Insect Sight****
*Motion****
*Snilloc's Heat Seeking Major Missile****
Stone Shape
Teleport

Level Six

*Aura***
Conjure Animals
Control Weather
Eyebite
Legend Lore
Chain Lightning
Contingency
*Curse of Lycanthropy****
Glassee
*Magical Susceptibility****
Move Earth
*Power Word Silence**
True Seeing
*Weapon Return****
Part Water
*Reconstruction**
Veil

Level Seven

Banishment
*Bug****
Duo-Dimension
Forcecage
*Iceblight***
Phase Door
*Prismal's Reversal****
*Spectral Guard**
*Body Outside Body***
Charm Plants
*Elemental Servant***
*Gemjump**
Limited Wish
Prismatic Spray
*Purdue's Revenge****
*Spelltrap**

Level Eight

*Call***
Demand
Glassteel
Mass Charm
Permancy
Spell Engine
*Cloud Trapeze***
*Giant Size***
Incendiary Cloud
Maze
Prismatic Wall
Sunburst

Level Nine

Astral Spell
Foresight
Gate
Meteor Swarm
Shape Change
Weird
Crystalbrittle
Elminster's Evasion*
Instant Regeneration**
Prismal's Revenge***
Time Stop

* indicates spells from the FORGOTTEN REALMS™ Adventures tome.
** indicates spells from the ORIENTAL ADVENTURES™ tome.
*** indicates unique or very rare spells.

Prismal appears elderly, perhaps age 50 or 60. In fact, he is 175. He is 6'2" tall, weighs 170 lbs, and has brown eyes. His black hair, streaked with gray, is always worn in the latest style. Many believe Prismal is either immortal or had one of his special spells cast upon him to halt his aging. Truth be known, Prismal imbibes *potions of longevity,* but he does not drink them in the manner they were designed to be used. Instead of drinking a whole potion every 10 years to reduce his age, Prismal sips a small portion every few months or so. His motto has always been, "Take a little every so often, instead of a lot every 10 years. It's easier on the system." It is not clear if this actually keeps Prismal young, but something is maintaining his vigor.

Illustration by Dave Zenz

Prismal and his younger brother were born to wealthy parents; his father was a ranger originally from Pangaea, and his mother was a wu jen from Kara Tur. The family lived in Shou Lung, and because of their affluence, the boys always had the best of clothes. To this day, the mage dresses in the finest robes available.

When Prismal reached the age of five, sohei from a nearby monastery, assassinated his parents, taking Prismal, his brother, and all the family's wealth with them. The men dropped Prismal in the Dunes of Death, an ocean of sand more than 2,000 miles across. The sohei left Prismal to die, as he refused to cooperate with them. The men took his brother and disappeared.

After seven harsh months, during which Prismal barely survived, wandering priests happened upon the boy and escorted him to their monastary. He stayed with them, learning mage skills becoming accepted by the priesthood of Ptah.

At age 25, he became a monk, and to this day his arms bear the burns of his fellowship: a leopard on his right arm and an oriental dragon on his left.

On Prismal's 30th birthday, the monks revealed that many years ago they had heard of a young boy who showed great promise in the mystic arts. They appointed their sohei to bring the boy to the Dunes of Death to see if he had the stamina to become a monk. In payment, the sohei could steal what they wanted from his parent's tenement. That young boy was Prismal.

Angered by the news, Prismal fled the sanctuary of the monastery, vowing to avenge the death of his parents. Prismal searched the world for his brother, learning only that he was sold to a slave trader.

Disillusioned with the world, Prismal threw his efforts into magic, working on spells, and writing a book about his experiences in the process, Prismal's Perils. He had this manuscript transcribed 1,000 times, and was amazed how quickly the copies sold. One purchaser, Mortimar (not the Mortimer listed below), contacted Prismal with a business proposition. This offer entailed the creation of a magic shop to sell Prismal's books as well as every imaginable spell component. The sales of his books soon allowed the partnership to expand into seven stores in only one year.

Soon, Prismal gave Mortimar control over the business end of their new shop, which they dubbed Chemcheaux. Mortimar handled the sale and purchase of items and components, and the sale of new franchises. During this time, Prismal authored seven more books.

One day, an individual came into the shop, requesting a curse be placed upon a man who was involved with his wife. Angered by the graphic story, Prismal agreed to help. The man rolled in a chest containing nearly 100,000 platinum pieces for payment.

Prismal searched for the would-be-victim for three days, eventually finding the man and placing a horrible curse on him. The man turned out to be an official in the Electropolis government in Pangaea, and Prismal's face turned up everywhere in the city on wanted posters when the man finally recovered.

Prismal fled back to Chemcheaux where his partner, Mortimar was frantic with worry. Mortimar devised a plan to announce Prismal's death from an experiment gone awry. Prismal agreed to the plot and the constabulary stopped searching for Prismal once Mortimar conveniently "found" a body in an alley.

The story does not end here. The whole incident was an elaborate setup by Mortimar to harm Prismal. Mortimar got a notarized copy of Prismal's death certificate and had Prismal's name taken off the Chemcheaux ownership papers. There seemed nothing that Prismal could do about it. If he exposed Mortimar, Prismal would be tried and killed for his crime against the Electropolis official, and proving his partner framed him would be nearly impossible—since the man who hired Prismal to embarass the official disappeared.

After hearing his partner gloat over his achievements, Prismal fled Chemcheaux under disguise. He started working on his most fearsome spell, *Prismal's Revenge.* Within 11 months, the spell was complete, and Prismal transferred it to a cursed scroll. Disguised as a lowly fighter, Prismal walked into Chemcheaux with the scroll in hand. He gave it to the proprietor, Mortimar, claiming it was a Dexterity booster followed by a Constitution enhancer. Mortimar paid only 50 gp for the scroll and decided to use the magic on himself. By the time Mortimar had finished reading the scroll, he was a twisted wreck of a man. Prismal left without a word and has never used the spell since.

Prismal's closest friend, Archmeagan took over the Chemcheaux franchises. Mortimar, looking for a way to end his torment, confessed to cursing the Electropolitan official, even though he did not do it. Seven days later, Mortimar was executed. Prismal then came out of hiding, and was jailed for 60 days for falsifying government records—his death certificate. When he was released, Archmeagan returned ownership of Chemcheaux to Prismal, who has sworn not to let anyone else run his business again.

Mortimer

22nd Level Male Human Wizard

STR: 18
INT: 18
WIS: 16
DEX: 14
CON: 14
CHR: 15
AC Normal: 0
AC Rear: 0
Hit Points: 34
Alignment: Chaotic Good
Languages: Common, Centaur, Dryad, Dwarvish, Elvish, Minotaur, Satyr, Sylph.
Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, dart, sling, staff
NonWeapon Proficiencies: Ancient history (18), brewing (18), direction sense (19), etiquette (15), gem cutting (14), healing (18), herbalism (16), reading/writing (19), fishing (15)
Magic Items: *Ring of protection +5, cloak of protection +5, wand of lightning*
Wizard spells/day: 5 5 5 5 5 5 4 4 3

Spell Books

Level One

Affect Normal Fires	*Alarm*
Burning Hands	*Cantrip*
Feather Fall	*Grease*
Hold Portal	*Message*
Shocking Grasp	*Sleep*
Spider Climb	*Unseen Servant*

Level Two

Blur	*Deeppockets*
Flaming Sphere	*Forget*
Irritation	*Levitate*
Misdirection	*Scare*
Strength	*Web*
Whispering Wind	*Wizard Lock*

Level Three

Dispel Magic	*Fireball*
Hold Person	*Infravision*
Non-Detection	*Secret Page*
Sepia Snake Sigil	*Slow*
Suggestion	*Tongues*
Wind Wall	*Wraithform*

Level Four

Enervation	*Extension*
Fear	*Hallucinatory Terrain*
Illusionary Wall	*Massmorph*
Oliluke's Resilient Sphere	*Shout*
Solid Fog	*Wall of Ice*

Level Five

Advanced Illusion	*Chaos*
Cloudkill	*Dismissal*
Domination	*Dream*
Fabricate	*Hold Monster*
Magic Jar	*Shadow Magic*

Level Six

Disintegrate	*Extension III*
Geas	*Globe of Invulnerability*
Invisible Stalker	*Lower Water*
Mislead	*Move Earth*
Part Water	*Project Image*

Level Seven

Banishment	*Charm Plants*
Control Undead	*Forcecage*
Mass Invisibility	*Phase Door*
Sequester	*Spell Turning*

Level Eight

Clone	*Demand*
Glasteel	*Mass Charm*
Maze	*Mind Blank*
Permanency	*Screen*

Level Nine

Astral Spell	*Energy Drain*
Foresight	*Imprisonment*
Shape Change	*Temporal Stasis*

Mortimer is the owner and manager of Chemcheaux 223. Mortimer, somewhat shorter than Prismal, stands 5'6" tall and weighs 160 pounds. His larger frame makes him appear slow, but he is very dexterous, and his incredible strength makes him a foe to be respected.

With the occasional assistance from Rhodhan, Mortimer keeps the increasing demands of the business at bay.

Born in Calimport, Toril, Mortimer was once looked down upon by the native Ravens Bluff people. Since he purchased the Chemcheaux franchise from Prismal and Rhodhan, however, his social status has taken a turn for the better. He is now invited to the large balls and elite social gatherings attended by only the very rich, or the very powerful. Mortimer relishes the limelight.

Chemcheaux 223 was once the victim of an attempted robbery. Redrock Blueclaw of the Thieves' Guild aspired to alleviate the shop of its fabled teleport pad. He heard Mortimer had his eyes only on retirement in the Almar Forest, and let security become lax. Redrock stealthily crawled into the shop under cover of night. Leaping over the counter, he sat to pick the lock on the door leading to the back room. However, as the lock clicked open, Redrock heard a faint footfall behind him.

A fist fight ensued, and Redrock barely escaped with his life. The little thief never knew that Mortimer let him get away.

Rhodhan

19th Level Human Male Cleric

STR: 18/00
INT: 17
WIS: 18
DEX: 15
CON: 14
CHR: 17
AC Normal: 3
AC Rear: 3
Hit Points: 44
Alignment: Lawful Good
Languages: Common, Centaur, Dryad, Dwarvish, Elvish, Minotaur, Satyr.

Weapon Proficiencies: None
NonWeapon Proficiencies: Animal handling (17), animal training (18) ancient history (16), healing (17), heraldry (17), herbalism (15), reading/writing (18), spellcraft (15)
Magic Items: *Robe of protection +4, boots of speed, ring of protection +3*
Priest spells/day: 9 9 8 3 4 5 4 2

Rhodhan has major access to the shperes of All, Animal, Creation, Divination, Elemental, Guardian, Healing, and Protection.

A close personal friend of Prismal, Rhodhan was born on the world of Pangaea, in the city of Chamshaea. Rhodhan is a 44-year-old, blue-eyed, handsome man who is married to a beautiful wife. They have seven children, two of whom are grown and married; his eldest daughter has three children. Rhodan has very light brown hair that he prefers to keep long and tied in a curly pony tail.

Even though their birthplaces are on opposite hemispheres of the planet Pangaea, Rhodhan and Prismal ran into each other soon after Prismal regained control of the Chemcheaux franchises. (Prismal has kept the whole story behind the change in ownership secret from Rhodhan.)

Prismal was impressed with Rhodhan's care of the needy, and his love for the law, and hired him. As second in command in charge of Chemcheaux, Rhodhan takes care of the selling of franchises, as well as the payments to the franchise owners.

Even though he is in control of these two functions, Rhodhan has 47 assistants who do the actual work. Rhodhan only makes sure the books are in order and that no one is skimming. Rhodhan has served in this function for 25 years, and his rumored take-home pay is greater than 100,000 gp annually.

Rhodan has never engaged another being in combat. He never carries weapons, preferring to talk his way out of a fight. However, if his opponent demands an altercation of one sort or another, Rhodhan will agree to arm wrestling.

New Magic

Prismal's Reversal (Alteration)

Level: 7
Range: Touch
Components: V, S
Duration: Permanent
Casting Time: 5 Rounds
Area of Effect: One portal
Saving Throw: None

This enchantment reverses the relative velocity of an object, whether animate or inanimate, passing through the area of effect. The spell only can be cast upon an area bounded on four sides by solid barriers, such as a window or a door. People running or objects flying through the spell's area are forced to spend more time passing through, while people who walk slowly actually move through very quickly.

This spell is very rare, and as of yet, Prismal is the only one known to use it. He has refused all offers to sell the spell, since knowing how the spell works makes it easier to destroy. A *dispel magic* has a 1% plus 1% per level chance of negating *Prismal's Reversal.*

Prismal created this spell as a theft deterrent. Since thieves are apt to run from an establishment, this spell makes the running thief extremely easy to catch. The chart below shows the time required to pass through the spell's effect relative to movement rates.

Speed	Time
3	1/16 Round
6	1/8 Round
9	1/4 Round
12	1/2 Round
15	1 Round
18	2 Rounds
21	4 Rounds
24	8 Rounds
27	16 Rounds
30	32 Rounds

The Chemcheaux Teleport Pad

Cost: 2,000,000 gp
XP Value: 200,000

These pads are found only in Chemcheaux Magic Shops. By specifying a number, the person standing on the star-shaped pad is instantly teleported to the pad at the specified Chemcheaux.

If a *teleport pad* is stolen, Prismal and several of the strongest mages in his employ *teleport* themselves to the stolen *pad.* The mages simply stand on any of the remaining *teleport pads,* use the number of the Chemcheaux from which the *pad* is stolen, and they appear at the stolen *pad,* wherever it is. All the mages who come to retrieve the item are never under the 18th level of experience, and all carry items of extreme power. If the mages do not experience hostilities when they arrive, they merely pick up the *teleport pad,* and *teleport* themselves, via spell, to the appropriate shop to return the item. If they meet aggression, they do not hesitate to obliterate the opponents as quickly as possible. ❑

Thanks to: Dori "The Barbarian" Watry
CHEMCHEAUX is a false trademark owned by Chemcheaux of Electropolis, Pangaea and Prismal the Outrageous.
PANGAEA is a world owned and operated by Dale "Slade" Henson.

The Living Galaxy

Continued from page 17

of a powerful artifact, yet betrayed the woman who helped him and brought on a revenge that ruined him. See any characterization hooks here?

—*A Piece of My Heart,* by Keith Walker. This is an oral history of the experiences of 26 women who served in the Vietnam War. All of these stories are worth reading in their own right, but they also provide enormous amounts of background that can be adapted to fit a science-fiction heroine who has served with military units.

—*Bloods,* by Wallace Terry. This, too, is an oral history, and it tells the stories of 20 black Americans who fought in Vietnam. An extremely powerful book, this, too, is filled with material someone could use to develop a character with both a military background and a host of problems as a result.

—*Cyrano de Bergerac,* by Edmond Rostand. This magnificent play about one of the finest swordsmen in France would be the perfect character study for someone who wanted a tragic but courageous (and ever-so-witty) character. Would other characters play the roles of Roxane and Christian? How would this tale be rewritten in your role-playing group?

—*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders,* by the American Psychiatric Association. You should find a copy of the *DSM III* in your local public or school library, paying close attention to any sections that might involve your character. Sticklers for intense role-playing will find lots of material here useful in drawing a character's "internal portrait." In particular, copy the section on post-traumatic stress disorders, which are suffered by people who have survived terrible events such as war or natural disasters. I used it in describing the third set of possible problems for Captain Hugh Taggart, making him an ex-POW.

Keep your eyes and your notebook open as you look around your day-to-day world. The material you need to create your most memorable science-fiction gaming character is right in front of you. Don't be fooled by perfection. Give your gem a flaw, and watch it shine out in the darkness.

❑

With Great Power

Continued from page 19

absorbing and could be fitted into any super hero RPG.

Campaign Accessories: The MARVEL SUPER HEROES and DC HEROES games have received extensive support from their publishers, but the most innovative line of accessories lately has been those published for I.C.E.'s Champions game. Recent releases included a sourcebook on Great Britain and its heroes *(Kingdom of Champions),* a book on various races invading Earth *(Invasions: Target Earth),* and one about other dimensions and alternate realities *(Champions in 3-D),* as well as an assortment of NPC character and organizations books. Whether you play the Champions game, these books will stir your imagination and provide many ideas to incorporate into your campaign.

❑

Logic Puzzle Solution

Continued from page 9

	Locale	Name	Type	Metal	Gemstone	Color
Sword 1	North	Trollcrusher	Bastard	Gold	Diamond	White
Sword 2	NE	Giantmaimer	Broad	Electrum	Amethyst	Purple
Sword 3	SE	Demoncleaver	Khopesh	Platinum	Emerald	Green
Sword 4	South	Orctamer	Scimitar	Bronze	Sapphire	Blue
Sword 5	SW	Scaleslicer	Long	Mithril	Obsidian	Black
Sword 6	NW	Gnollslayer	Short	Silver	Ruby	Red

Into the Dark

Continued from page 22

Oddly enough, *The Barbarians* is the closest thing to a film version of a run-of-the-mill session of the AD&D® game that I have ever seen. At various times, random monsters appear for no other reason but to test out the edges on the heroes' weapons. The Barbarian Brothers, whose dialogue is filled with modern slang, argue over who gets what weapon from a treasure cache. I've sat through similar adventures, with people who ran PCs just like Gore and Kutchek. I can almost hear my gaming group from high school doing the voices. It's kind of spooky.

The Barbarians boasts the same sort of appeal that made *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* popular. With a better director and better production values, this might have been as good a film, too.

As is, you'll want to rent this one and watch it with your friends after a long night of gaming.

More barbarians next month, but hopefully a few less captive women of royal blood.

❑

Extra Enchantments

Spells For AD&D® 2nd Edition Game Wizards

by Bryan Manahan

Stairway

(Invocation/Evocation)
Level: Second
Range: 10 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn +1 turn per level of caster
Casting Time: 5
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell creates a shimmering, transparent 10-foot-wide stairway that ascends or descends up to 10 feet per level of the caster. The stairway can be narrower than 10 feet, but never wider. Additionally, the caster can opt to have the stairway steep or gradual; the stairs can be no steeper than 60 degrees and no more gentle than 30 degrees. The stairway lasts for the listed duration, or until dispelled. The stairway can support 400 pounds, plus an additional 10 pounds per caster level. The stairway is dispelled if its weight limit is exceeded.

The material components are a quartz crystal, powdered silver, and powdered talc.

Guardian

(Conjuration/Summoning)
Level: Third
Range: 2'
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 7-10 hours
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: None

This spell, developed by the great mage Serrel, brings forth a quasi-fighter (AC 8; MV 6; HD 4; hp 22; AT 1; D 1-6; AL Neutral; THACO 16). The guardian can be controlled by the caster, but cannot be given instructions exceeding 25 words. The guardian cannot speak, and it cannot move more than two feet in any direction from its creation point.

The guardian is invulnerable to all spells except *dispel magic, dismissal, disintegrate, alter reality, limited wish,* and *wish*. These spells destroy the manifestation. The guardian is impervious to missile attacks and to fire. The guardian remains at his post for 7 to 10 hours or until dispelled or brought to 0 hit points.

The material components are a small silver statue of a fighter and a ball of cotton.

Serrel's Minor Enchantment

(Enchantment)
Level: Third
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: One item
Saving Throw: None

When a wizard casts this spell upon a normal item, a +1 protective bonus is temporarily bestowed. This spell only affects armor, shields, cloaks, and other objects worn by an individual. For example, a cloak would gain a +1 protection. This spell can be cast upon a permanently enchanted item. The spell increases the item's bonus by +1, but only if the combined bonus is +3 or less.

The material components are powdered silver and a cracked gem valued at 100 gp or more.

Serrel's Major Enchantment

(Enchantment)
Level: Fifth
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn + 1 round/level
Casting Time: 1 turn
Area of Effect: One item
Saving Throw: None

This spell is the same as *Serrel's minor enchantment* except it grants a +2 bonus, and the spell works on weapons, and other items a character can hold.

Serrel's Confining Sphere

(Alteration, Evocation)
Level: Sixth
Range: 6'
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 turn/level
Casting Time: 6
Area of Effect: Special
Saving Throw: Special

When this spell is cast, it creates a magical, transparent sphere of force around the item or creatures specified by the caster. Half of the sphere is above the ground, the other half below. The sphere can be used to entrap a creature or to protect something. If the sphere is cast upon an unwilling creature, a successful saving throw vs magic allows the creature to escape the area of effect.

The sphere is immobile, and no solids, liquids, or magically-created gases can pass into or out of it. In addition, spells cannot be cast into or out of *Serrel's confining sphere.* The sphere is immune to *dispel magic* and *disintegrate.* However, the sphere can be destroyed before the expiration of the spell by: a properly worded *wish* or *alter reality* spell, a *rod of cancellation,* a *cube of force,* (this drains one charge) or a *sphere of annihilation.*

The material components are a small quartz sphere and a lump of earth.

Incendiary Entrapment

(Alteration)
Level: Seventh
Range: Touch
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 100 square feet + 5 square feet/level
Saving Throw: 1/2

This spell allows a wizard to create a magical trap upon a floor, stairway, door, or other surface. When a creature contacts the surface the area explodes into flames after a delay of 20 to 60 seconds, causing combustibles to ignite and other substances to melt, vaporize, or char, unless the item saves vs. magical fire. The caster can specify the delay when completing the spell, but it cannot be changed thereafter. The flames inflict 1-4 hit points of damage per level of the caster (up to maximum of 10d4) upon all creatures within the area of effect. A successful save vs. magic reduces the damage by half.
The *incendiary entrapment* spell lasts until a creature contacts the surface and triggers the explosion.

To complete this spell, the caster must sprinkle a mixture of finely powdered magnesium and saltpeter upon the surface to be enchanted.

❑

YOU'VE HEARD ABOUT THIS BEST SELLER-- THE TRUE STORY OF A HORROR WRITER'S CONTACT WITH MARTIANS...

#1 THE CONTROVERSIAL BEST SELLER

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A REAL STORY

WHITEY SCHLIMMBESSER
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...AND DESPITE SKEPTICS SAYING THIS WAS HIS BEST FICTION, WHITEY SCHLIMMBESSER BECOMES A CELEBRITY!

HE'S ENORMOUSLY SUCCESSFUL...

est Sellers

Nonfiction

This Week	
1	CONSUMMATION, by Whitey Schlimmbesser (Wells & Wells, $19.39.) One man's account of the Martians among us.
2	THE LITTLE LAWYER WITH THE BIGGEST SUITS, by Harvey "Short" Cummings with Bernice Jamison (Andiron Books, $29.95.) The diminutive attorney's noted career.
3	ALL I REALLY NEED TO KNOW, I READ IN THE MEN'S ROOM, by Robert Phelgm. (Porzellan Press, $17.95.) Inspirational bathroom material.
4	THE UNAUTHORIZED BIOGRAPHY OF KATIE KELLY, by Kitty Kelley (Yenta, $22.00.) Life of former NBC TV critic told behind her back.
5	YOU'LL NEVER KEEP LUNCH DOWN IN THIS TOWN AGAIN, by Mackenzie Phillips (Odyssey House, $22.00.) Life in the fast lane.

HE'S TAKEN SERIOUSLY

...AND HE'S GOTTEN A SEPARATION!

...ill go for a good cause.

* * *

Avant-garde artiste **Rick Parker** will have a show of his work at the Barking Dog Museum. Rick's come a long way. He started his art career lettering - get this - comic books... Speaking of matters literary, word has it the Whitey Schlimmbessers have put some light years between them... Director **Sandy Bates** has signed yok-scribe **Isaac Davis** to pen his next flick with comic **Alvy Singer**... New twist on the Milli Vanilli uproar: their fans had other people buy their records... The new ...venue in Paris ...

WHITEY SCHLIMMBESSER FEARS THE WORST WHEN HIS WIFE FILES A COMPLAINT FOR DIVORCE! TO PROTECT HIS MARITAL AND MARTIAN ASSETS, HE HIRES

WOLFF & BYRD

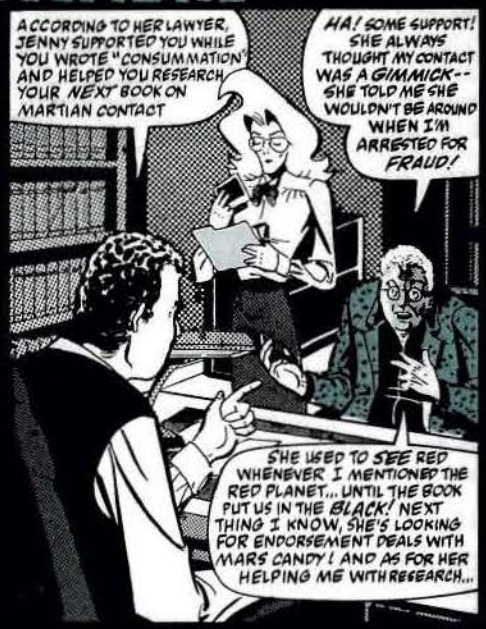
COUNSELORS OF THE MACABRE

PART ONE OF THREE

by Batton Lash

YOU AND JENNY WERE MARRIED FOR FIVE YEARS, MR. SCHLIMMBESSER. PERHAPS THERE'S A CHANCE FOR RECONCILIATION?
THE MARRIAGE WAS DOOMED MR. BYRD. WE DESPERATELY TRIED TO START A FAMILY, BUT IT JUST WASN'T IN THE STARS FOR US. NO... SOMETHING ELSE WAS...
JENNY CLAIMS YOU COMMITTED ADULTERY
© 1991 BATTON LASH

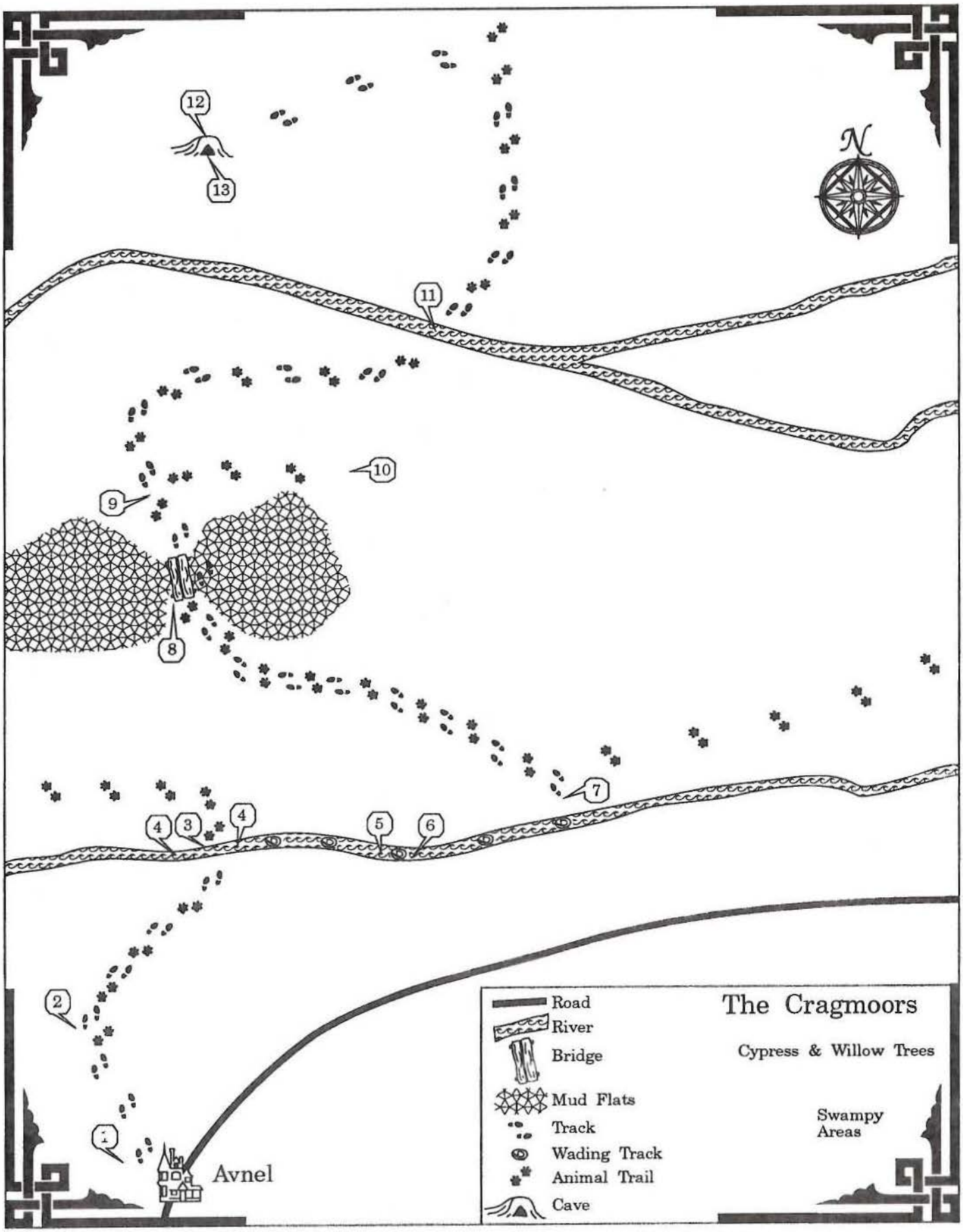
WHAT CAN I SAY, MS. WOLFF? GUILTY. I MET THE PERFECT WOMAN WHILE I WAS MARRIED. IT HAPPENS, RIGHT? I'D LIKE TO HAVE AN AMICABLE DIVORCE-- I'M WILLING TO LET JENNY HAVE ALL MY EARTHLY POSSESSIONS...
I'M GLAD YOU FEEL THAT WAY, Mr. SCHLIMMBESSER. SHE WANTS THAT AND MORE! SHE CLAIMS SHE'S ENTITLED TO YOUR MARTIAN RESEARCH!


ACCORDING TO HER LAWYER, JENNY SUPPORTED YOU WHILE YOU WROTE "CONSUMMATION" AND HELPED YOU RESEARCH YOUR NEXT BOOK ON MARTIAN CONTACT
HA! SOME SUPPORT! SHE ALWAYS THOUGHT MY CONTACT WAS A GIMMICK-- SHE TOLD ME SHE WOULDN'T BE AROUND WHEN I'M ARRESTED FOR FRAUD!
SHE USED TO SEE RED WHENEVER I MENTIONED THE RED PLANET... UNTIL THE BOOK PUT US IN THE BLACK! NEXT THING I KNOW, SHE'S LOOKING FOR ENDORSEMENT DEALS WITH MARS CANDY! AND AS FOR HER HELPING ME WITH REGEARCH...

"JENNY SUSPECTED ANOTHER WOMAN. I'D GO UPSTATE FREQUENTLY TO INVESTIGATE UFO SIGHTINGS. ONE GLORIOUS NIGHT, I GOT PHOTOS, RECORDINGS AND MORE THAN I EVER BARGAINED FOR! JENNY FOLLOWED ME AND PUT THE KIBOSH ON THAT BY FRIGHTENING THE MARTIANS AWAY!
WHITEY--NO!! THIS IS SICK! HORRIBLE!!
JENNY--YOU'RE RUINING EVERYTHING! WAIT! COME BACK! SOB PLEASE COME BACK!!

JENNY SAW IT ALL-- AND SHE SEES MY STORY AS A CASH COW JUMPING OVER THE MILKY WAY!
AND THE OTHER WOMAN--?
SCHLIMMBESSER (PHOTOGRAPHS)

NEXT *Mars, Mon Amour*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Mud Flats
Track
Wading Track
Animal Trail
Cave
The Cragmoors
Cypress & Willow Trees
Swampy Areas

Classifieds

Canada: I am a 16-year-old DM/player looking for other gamers in Quebec's Eastern Townships area. Please contact Shawn Garty at 514-538-2335 or write me at General Delivery, Abercorn. Quebec, Canada J0E 1B0.

California: I'm looking for players and DMs for the AD&D® game in northern California. I have a campaign ready to go. If you're interested, please call Roy Lane at 916-243-2336 or write me at 2824 Lanning, Redding, CA 96001.

Missouri: I'm looking for Network members in the Franklin County area. I play the AD&D game, D&D® game, Shadowrun, and many others. I would like to start a Network club. I'm also looking for pen pals of any age or sex from the US or UK. Please contact Ronald Deaton, 1079 South Lay St. Clain, MO 63077; 314-629-7216.

Pennsylvania: I am a 19-year-old novice gamer looking for a semi-experienced DM to run campaigns for a group of novice adventurers. Interested? Please write Tim Manning, 825 E. Madison Street, Philadelphia, PA 19134 or call 215-634-6228 after 7:30 p.m.

General: I no longer have the time to role play, and I'm selling accessories for both versions of the AD&D game. I have manuals, modules, maps, game worlds, dice, and much more. Please contact David Papp at 403-437-3306 or write me at 2036-104A Street, Edmonton Alberta, Canada T6J 5K4.

General: Wanted: Out-of-print issues of DUNGEON™ Adventures and DRAGON® Magazine, issues 1 to 100. Please list issue number, condition, and price. Contact: Ron Walters, 419 Union Street, Manchester, NH 03103-5220.

General: I am interested in purchasing items for the original AD&D game: Copies of *Unearthed Arcana* and *Oriental Adventures,* DRAGON Magazine issues #100 and earlier, modules, etc. If you have any of these things, or others, to sell please contact Jay Summerlin, 1308 Ave. I, Brownwood, TX 76801. Also, are there other AD&D game players around Brownwood? Call me at 915-643-4797.

Think Cold!
Think Winter Fantasy '92

Join us at the Network's own convention
January 3-5, 1992

At the Ramada Inn Convention Center
Near the Milwaukee Airport

Join us for three fun-packed days of gaming excitement.
RPGA™ Network sanctioned AD&D® Game Feature, Masters, Grand Master, Benefit, Club, Living City, Paranoia, Marvel Super Heroes, Torg, Star Wars, and more!

For a registration form write: RPGA™ Network, P.O. Box 515, Lake Geneva, WI, 53147
If you want to judge, please list the games you are interested in running.

Conventions

Tacticon '91, September 13-15
Boulder, CO
The Denver Gamers Association presents this convention at the Denver/Boulder Ramada Inn. The schedule features games of all kinds, including train games, official Network tournaments for players of all levels, Battletech, Shadowrun, Kingmaker, B-17 and a large variety of miniature and computer events. There also will be demonstrations, seminars, several auctions, a figure-painting contest, and a live, interactive role-playing event. Preregistration is $15 for the weekend. For information contact: The Denver Gamers Association, P.O. Box 440058, Aurora, CO 80044, 303-363-8967.

AndCon '91, September 13-15
Hudson, OH
AndCon is a regional gaming convention and the national play-by-mail exposition. Features include six Network events (including an AD&D® game Masters tournament), plenty of role playing, board games, miniatures, PBM events, and parties. The dealers area features top designers from Ral Partha and Stellar Games. All role-playing events will take place in quiet, private rooms. The convention site is the Holiday Inn in Hudson. Pre-registration is $15. For information contact: AndCon '91, P.O. Box 142, Kent, OH 44240-0003, 216-673-2117.

BorderCon '91, October 18-20
Kansas City, MO
This convention, sponsored by the Role-Players Guild of Kansas City, features dozens of rounds of Network events—including Masters and Grand Masters games. The schedule includes scores of other events, including our CHAOS III tournament. The convention is co-sponsored this year by the Heart of America Historical Miniatures Gaming Society, which will offer a plethora of miniatures and board games. There also will be a dealer's room, auction, and a miniatures painting contest. The convention site is the Rodeway Inn-downtown Kansas City, at 6th and Main (just off I-70). Room rates are $30 a night for single or double occupancy. Convention registration is $12 before September 20th, $15 thereafter. For more information, send a SASE to: BorderCon, P.O. Box 7457, Kansas City, MO 64116-0157 or call 816-455-5020 any time.

CUBECON, October 19
Butler, PA
Sponsored by the BCCC Gaming Guild and the Circle of Swords, this one-day gaming convention will be held at the Butler County Community College. Scheduled events include Network tournaments, board games, miniatures games. role-playing games, a dealer's area, and a miniature painting contest. Registration is $5 until September 30th and $7 thereafter. For details, send a SASE to: Circle of Swords, P.O. Box 2126, Butler, PA 16002 or call Dave Schnur at 412-283-1159.

Con-Trary '91, October 25-27
Chicopee, MA
Con-Trary will be held this year at the Quality Inn & Conference Center in Chicopee. Featured Network events include the Northeastern Regional Finals, a Team event, and Masters and Grand Masters events. Many of these tournaments will use first-run scenarios. There will be many other games to play. Guest of honor is Batton Lash, the creator of Wolff & Byrrd. For information write: Carl Longley, 39 E School Street, West Springfield, MA 01089.

Rock-Con XVIII Game Fair, November 2-3 *Rockford, IL*
The Rockford Lutheran High School is once again the site for this weekend of gaming, which features a Network AD&D game benefit event and other sanctioned tournaments. There also will be a large Empire builder event, many miniatures events and war games, a dealers area, and an auction. Special guests include Tom Wham and Jim Ward. Network members willing to help run events should contact HQ without delay. Registration for one or two days is $5. For more information write: Rock-Con XVIII, 14225 Hansberry Road, Rockton, IL 61072.

WATCON, November 9-10
Waterloo, Ontario
This convention will be held at the University of Waterloo. Scheduled gaming includes role-playing events (including Network tournaments), miniatures events, and boardgames. There will be seminars, discussions, and presentations on the hobby. Special hotel rates are available for the convention. For information write: WATCON, c/o WATSFIC, Room CC215, Campus Centre, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G1.

PENTACON VII, November 16-17
Fort Wayne, IN
The Northeastern Indiana Gamers' Association will sponsor its first two-day convention at the Grand Wayne Center in downtown Fort Wayne. Tournaments include a two-round Network AD&D® game event, the NIGA Spotlight tournament, and an all-day miniature simulation. Other events include BattleTech, Morrow Project, naval miniatures, Darkus Thel, boardgames, and other role playing. Painting and costume contests, door prizes, and a flea market round out the offerings. Preregistration is $8 for both days, $5 for one day. For details write: PENTACON. P.O. Box 11176, Fort Wayne, IN 46856 or call Steve at 219-356-4209.

Wright State University Game Fair, January 18-19 *Fairborn, OH*
Join us at Wright State University's main campus for a weekend of gaming featuring introductory sessions of The Fifth Cycle by Shield Games, a parents' seminar on what role-playing games are all about, and several Network events. Registration-fee discounts are available to Network members and to all gamers who attend both days. Players and game masters seeking more information should write: Scott Hala, Game Fair Director, WSU Adventurers' Guild, P.O. Box 31016, Dayton, OH 45431-0016.